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- **Chapter Ten**
  Martyrdom of Imam Husayn

TRANSLATOR'S FOREWORD

The first historian to systematically collect the reports dealing with the events of Kerbala was named Abu Mikhnaf [Lut b. Yahya b. Sa'id b. Mikhnaf b. Salim al-Azdi al-Ghamidi al-Kufi] (d. 157 A.H.) in a work titled *Kitab Maqtal al-Husayn*. His father was a companion of Imam 'Ali (a). Abu Mikhnaf was a trusted and a reliable historian whose tradition-reports were relied upon by many historians—Shi'ah and Sunni—including Muhammad b. 'Amr Waqidi (d. 207 A.H.), Tabari (d. 310 A.H.), Ibn Qutaybah (d. 322 A.H.), Mas'udi (d. 345 A.H.), Mufid (d. 413 A.H.), Shahrastani (d. 548 A.H.), Khatib Khwarazmi (d. 568 A.H.), Ibn Athir (d. 630 A.H.), Sibt b. Jawzi (d. 654 A.H.), and others.

Abu Mikhnaf's original work on Imam Husayn (a) seems to have been lost and that which has reached us has been transmitted through his student, Hisham b. al-Kalbi (d. 204 A.H.), who preserved most of his teacher's work and provides a detailed version of Abu Mikhnaf's account. The present translation work relies on his reports to reconstruct Abu Mikhnaf's original work titled *Kitab Maqtal al-Husayn*.

Ibn Nadim in *al-Fihrist* enumerates 22 monographs composed by Abu Mikhnaf and Najashi lists 28 titles. Most of his works deal with the Shi'ah and the events unfolding in Kufah. Thus, there is no work dealing with Banu Umayyah,

Banu Marwan, uprising of Muslim Khurasani or the Abbasids. Some of the titles of his works are:

Kitab al-Saqifah
Kitab al-Riddah
Kitab al-Shura
Kitab al-Jamal
Kitab al-Siffin
Kitab Maqtal al-Hasan
Kitab Maqtal al-Husayn
Sirat al-Husayn
Kitab Khutbah al-Zahra
Kitab Akhbar al-Mukhtar

It is indisputable that Abu Mikhnaf was a profound scholar and man of integrity. For instance, an eminent scholar of works on *rijal*, Najashi, writes, "[Abu Mikhnaf] was a preeminent scholar in Kufah." Ayatullah Muhammad Baqir al-Sadr and Allamah Sharaf al-Din both agree with this assessment.

Finally, I end on a word of caution. There is a popular work that is widely circulated in Qum, Najaf and Lebanon under the title *Maqtal al-Husayn* and attributed to Abu Mikhnaf.[1] This work is most certainly a forgery and

[1]*Maqtal al-Husayn* or *Maqtal Abi Mikhnaf* (Qum: al-Sharif al-Radi, 1990); *Maqtal al-Husayn* (Tehran: al-A‘lami, n.d.); *Maqtal al-Husayn* (Najaf: al-Haydariyyah, n.d.); *Maqtal al-Husayn* (Beirut: Mu'assat al-Wafa', 1984); *Maqtal al-Husayn* (Kuwait: Maktabat al-Alfayn, 1987), *Maqtal al-Husayn* (Beirut, 1971)

should not be trusted by scholars and *majalis* reciters.[2] Some of the serious problems of *Maqtal al-Husayn* include:

1. A major flaw in the chain of transmission (*isnad*), which has Abu Mikhnaf transmitting on the authority of Abu al-Mundhir Hisham, who in turn transmitted on the authority of Muhammad b. Sa'ib al-Kalbi.[3] This is impossible, since Abu Mikhnaf was Hisham's teacher!

2. Reports transmitted by Abu Mikhnaf on the authority of Kulayni,[4] who died in 329 A.H.; whereas Abu Mikhnaf died in 157 A.H.—an impossibility.

3. Its account that Yazid sent his first letter to the governor Walid on 10 Sha'ban.[5] There is unanimity in the sources that this was done in the month of Rajab, and Imam Husayn (a) arrived in Mecca on 3 Sha'ban 60 A.H.

4. A cited report that when Imam Husayn received news of the martyrdom of Muslim b 'Aqil and Hani b. 'Urwah on his way to Kufah, he gathered everyone and instructed them to prepare for a return journey to Medina! Upon arrival in Medina, they visited the grave of the Prophet (S) and wept profusely at the site. Shortly thereafter,

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[2] For a detailed analysis on hagiographical literature and distortions (*tahrif*) that have crept into the reports dealing with Kerbala, see the work of Ayatullah Murtada Mutahhari, *Hemaseh-ye Husayni* or *'Ashura: Misrepresentations and Distortions*, tr. Ali Quli Qara'i (London, 1999).

[3] *Maqtal al-Husayn* (Qum: al-Sharif al-Radi, 1990), p. 5.

[4] Ibid., p. 12.

[5] Ibid., p. 17.

they resume their journey towards Kufah![6] There is no such report in any historical account.

5. Its record that Imam Husayn (a) arrived in Kerbala on 10 Muharram 61 A.H.[7]

I wish to convey my deep appreciation and gratitude to Al-Hajj Mushtaq Kurji for sponsoring this work and for strongly encouraging me to undertake its translation. Without his support and encouragement, this work would not have materialized. I fondly remember the perfect kindness and hospitality he and his family have extended to me during my stay at their residence in Muharram 1420 A.H.

I pray that the reader will find this work useful, and that it will help us reconstruct an authentic and authoritative account of the events surrounding the episode of Kerbala – free of myths and hagiography. I have made every effort to render a faithful translation to English from Arabic, and earnestly hope that the reader will overlook any shortcomings that may have crept into this work.

Wa bi-l-laahi-t-tawfiq,
Hamid Mavani
Montreal

[6] Ibid., p 61.
[7] Ibid., p. 78.

Chapter 1
Imam Husayn in Medina

Last Will and Testament of Mu‘awiyah

When Mu‘awiyah fell ill with an ailment from which he died, he summoned his son Yazid[8] and said to him:

> O my son, I have spared you the trouble of paving the way for your succession. I have humbled the enemies for you, subjugated the Arabs and produced a consensus among them. I am only concerned about four individuals from Quraysh who might challenge you in this respect—Husayn b. ‘Ali, ‘Abdallah b. ‘Umar, ‘Abdallah b. Zubayr and ‘Abd al-Rahman b. Abi Bakr.[9] ‘Abdallah b. ‘Umar is occupied with acts of worship and would pledge allegiance to you in the absence of other influences. As for Huasyn b. ‘Ali, the people of Iraq will not cease calling upon him until they cause him to rebel. If he comes out against you, you

[8] He was born in 28 A.H. and died on 14 Rabi‘ al-Awwal, 64 A.H. at the age of 36 years. His mother's name was Maysun b. Kalbi. He succeeded to the caliphate on 1 Rajab 60 A.H. and ruled for 3 years and 8 months—Translator.

[9] There is a report that ‘Abd al-Rahman b. Abi Bakr died in 55 A.H. at a place called Habashi, about 16 kms from Mecca. If true, then inclusion of his name in the will does not make sense, because Mu‘awiyah died in 60 A.H.—Translator.

> should overpower him and forgive him, because he enjoys kinship and a great claim. Ibn Abi Bakr will follow the opinion of his companions. He has no ambition beyond an interest in women and pleasure. The one who will lie in ambush like a lion and dupe you like a sly fox is Ibn Zubayr. He will pounce on you when an opportunity presents itself. If he rebels, confront him and tear him to pieces.

Yazid's Letter to Walid

Yazid assumed power in the beginning of Rajab 60 A.H., when Walib b. ‘Utbah b. Abi Sufyan was the governor of Medina, ‘Amr b. Sa‘id b. ‘As was the governor of Mecca, Nu‘man b. Bashir Ansari was the governor of Kufah and ‘Ubaydallah b. Ziyad was the governor of Basrah.

Yazid's primary concern was to secure the oath of allegiance from those individuals who had refused to accept Mu‘awiyah's demand that they take Yazid as his heir. Yazid was eager to put an end to their attitude. Thus, he wrote to Walid:

> In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful

> From Yazid, Commander of the Faithful, to Walid b. ‘Utbah.
>
> Mu‘awiyah was one of the servants of God whom God had blessed, honored and appointed with power and ability. He lived for a decreed term and died at an appointed time. May God have mercy on him, for he lived a praiseworthy life and died a man with the ethical quality of benevolence and God-consciousness. Peace be with you.

He wrote to him another small note on a parchment that was the size of a rat's ear:

> Summon Husayn, ‘Abdallah b. ‘Umar and ‘Abdallah b. Zubayr to give the oath of allegiance. Act with force and give them no choice in the matter of pledging the oath of allegiance. Peace be with you.

When the news of Mu‘awiyah’s death reached Walid, he was greatly shocked and dismayed. He summoned Marwam b. Hakam through a messenger.

Consultation with Marwan

When Walid read the contents of Yazid's letter, he said, "We belong to God and to Him is our return,"[10] and asked for divine mercy upon him. Thereafter, Walid sought Marwan's advice on the matter, asking him, "What is the best course of action for us to take?" Marwan replied, "In my opinion you should immediately send a messenger to this group and summon them to pledge allegiance and to submit to you. If they do so, you should accept that from them and leave them alone. However, if they decline, you should seize them and execute them before they receive the news of the death of Mu'awiyah. Surely, if they know about it, each one of them will pounce from a different direction and instigate dissension and opposition. Each will summon the people to himself."

Dispatching a Messenger

Walid sent 'Abdallah b. 'Amr b. 'Uthman—he was a youth at the time—to Husayn b. 'Ali and 'Abdallah b. Zubayr. 'Abdallah found both of them sitting in the mosque, but he arrived when Walid was not holding assemblies for the people. Further, neither of them was inclined to accompany him. He said, "Respond to the summons of the governor." They replied, "Go away for now and we will come later."

'Abdallah b. Zubayr approached Husayn and asked him, "Why do you think he summoned us at a time when he

[10] Qur'an 2:156.

does not hold assemblies?" Husayn replied, "I think that their tyrant has died and the summons is to secure our pledge of allegiance before the news circulates to the public." Ibn Zubayr said, "It cannot be anything else. What do you plan to do?" Husayn replied, "I will assemble my youth immediately and go to see him. Once I reach the door, I will ask them to wait there and I will go in. Ibn Zubayr interjected, "I fear for you if you enter." He replied, "I will go to him in a state of full preparedness to resist him."

Husayn returned and assembled his *mawali*[11] and his family members. They walked until they reached the door of Walid's house. Husayn told his followers, "I shall enter shortly. If I call for you or if you hear his voice raised, all of you rush in to my rescue. Otherwise, stay in your place until I return to you."

Imam Husayn with Walid

Husayn entered and greeted Walid as governor, while Marwan was seated beside him. He said the following in order not to arouse any suspicion about the possibility of Mu'awiyah's death, "Reconciling relations is better than severing them. May God reconcile you both." There was no response from them.

[11] Patrons or clients. The singular form of *mawali* is *mawla*.

Husayn approached them and sat down. Then Walid read him the letter of Yazid, informed him of the news of Mu‘awiyah’s death and called him to pledge allegiance. Husayn said, “'We are from God and to Him is our return.'[12] As for the oath of allegiance which you have demanded from me, it would not be appropriate for a person of my stature to do so in private. Further, you would not consider it sufficient unless I pledge allegiance in a public forum.” Walid agreed and Husayn continued, “When you come out to the people to announce and obtain their oath of allegiance, then at that time summon us as well such that it will be a single affair.”[13]

Walid desired to choose an easy option and said, “Go then in the name of God, and return to us when we assemble the people.”

Marwan exclaimed, “By God, if he departs from here without pledging the oath of allegiance, you will never get a similar opportunity without much bloodshed between you and him. Seize him and do not allow him to leave without pledging allegiance, or execute him.” Upon this, Husayn jumped up and said, “Son of a blue-eyed woman. You or he wish to kill me? By God, you are a liar and a sinner.” Then, he left the governor’s house and returned home with his followers.

[12] Qur'an 2:156.

[13] Khwarazmi in *Maqtal al-Husayn* relates that Imam Husayn also said, "Yazid openly commits acts of immorality, indulges in drinking and kills innocent souls. A person of my stature cannot pledge allegiance to a lowly person like him…" -Translator.

Marwan said to Walid, "You disobeyed and opposed me in this matter. By God, you will never have a similar opportunity to overpower [Husayn]." Walid responded by saying, "Woe to you for choosing something for me which contains the destruction of my religion. By God, I would not accept all the worldly treasure if it involves responsibility on the Day of Judgment for shedding the blood of Husayn. Glory be to God. Should I kill Husayn merely because he said 'I will not pledge allegiance'? By God, I think that the person held responsible on the Day of Judgment for shedding Husayn's blood will weigh little on the scales of God." Marwan retorted, "If this is your opinion, then you have acted properly." He said this without praising his view.

Imam Husayn at the Mosque of Medina

The soldiers of Walid were preoccupied with the pursuit of Ibn Zubayr until evening, when they came to Husayn for a response. He said, "Come back in the morning and we will have had a chance to reflect—and so will you." They left him alone for the night. It was Sunday night, corresponding to 28 Rajab, 60 A.H.

Abu Sa'id Maqburi says, "I saw Husayn entering the mosque of Medina while leaning on two men. First he leaned on one man, then on another man. He was reciting the verses of Ibn Mufarrigh Humayri:

I hope not to scare the camels when I launch an assault at dawn. I hope I am not called Yazid, if ever I should choose degradation in place of honor—while death overlooks me to see if I hesitate.

Ibn Hanafiyyah's Appeal to Imam Husayn

When Muhammad b. Hanafiyyah heard that Husayn was planning a trip with his family and companions, he approached him and said, "My brother, you are the dearest and most precious to me. There is no one more entitled than you to receive my sound advise. Avoid pledging allegiance to Yazid b. Mu'awiyah and keep away from the provinces as long as possible. Then, send your messenger to the people and invite them to support you. If they pledge allegiance to you, I praise God for that. But if they unite under a different person, God will not weaken your religion or reason for that. Neither will your stature and dignity be affected. I fear that you will enter one of the provinces and come to a people who will disagree among themselves about you—a segment will support you and another will oppose you. They will battle each other and you will be their first target. Consequently, the blood of the best person of this community, a role model for a father and mother, would be spilled wastefully and his family humiliated."

Husayn said, "But I am determined to move from here, my brother." Ibn Hanafiyyah said, "In that case, stay at Mecca. If it is a place of security for you, so much the

better. If it is problematic for you, you can head off to the surrounding desert and mountain peaks. You can shift from one place to another until you see where the people stand and understand their views. You will be most accurate in judgment when you confront the matters head on. The converse will occur if you turn your back on them."

Husayn said to him, "O my brother, you have provided sound advice and empathized with me. I hope that your judgment is correct and appropriate."

Imam Husayn Departs Medina

Walid was preoccupied with his pursuit of Ibn Zubayr on the first and second days until evening. During that time, he sent a delegation to Husayn on Saturday, 27 Rajab. Husayn told them, "Wait till morning, so that we have a chance to reflect and so will you." They left him alone that night [i.e. Sunday night, 28 Rajab] without pestering him.

Husayn set out from Medina under the cover of night, Sunday, with two days remaining in the month of Rajab in the year 60 A.H. He was accompanied by his sons and daughters, the sons of his brother and other members of his family, with the exception of Muhammad b. Hanafiyyah. He recited the following Qur'anic verse as he set off for Mecca: "So he left out of fear and kept himself on guard saying: My Lord, save me from the unjust people."[14] When he entered Mecca he recited the following: "And when he turned his face

[14] Qur'an, 28:21

towards Madyan, he said: Maybe my Lord will guide me in the right path."[15]

[15] Qur'an, 28:22.

Chapter 2
Imam Husayn in Mecca

Imam Husayn on the Way to Mecca

‘Uqbah b. Sim‘an says: We set out from Mecca and stayed on the main road. A person from Husayn’s family suggested to him, “The pursuers will not be able to catch up with you if you avoid the main road, as Ibn Zubayr did.” He replied, “By God, I will not abandon it until God judges what is pleasing to Him.”

Meeting with ‘Abdallah b. Muti‘ ‘Adawi

On the way, Husayn met ‘Abdallah b. Muti‘ who asked him, “I wish I could sacrifice my life in place of yours. Where do you intend to go?” He replied, “At Present, towards Mecca but; after that, the choice rests with God.” ‘Abdallah b. Muti‘ advised him, “May God choose the best course for you, but after arriving in Mecca be wary of proceeding to Kufah for it is an unlucky city where your father was killed and your brother abandoned and struck by a blow that almost killed him. Instead, stay in the sacred sanctuary of Mecca, for you are the unique and unrivaled prince of the Arabs. By God, the people will come to you from all directions to support you. Do not leave the sacred precincts. May my uncles be sacrificed for you—for, by God, should you die we will be enslaved.”

Imam Husayn in Mecca

Husayn continued his journey till he reached Mecca. It was Friday night on the third of Sha‘ban. He stayed in Mecca for the months of Sha‘ban, Ramadan, Shawwal, Dhulqa‘dah and until the 9th of Dhulhijjah. The people of Mecca began to visit Husayn, along with those who had come to perform the *‘umrah* from far away.

Ibn Zubayr had established himself near the Ka‘bah, where he would perform the daily prayers and perform the circumambulation. He would visit Husayn when others would come to pay him their respects. He would come for two successive days, sometimes once every two days. He never refrained from giving advice to Husayn. Husayn’s presence in Mecca was a source of great discomfort for ‘Abdallah b. Zubayr because he knew that the people of Hijaz would not follow him or pledge allegiance to him so long as Husayn was among them. This was because the rank and station of Husayn was much higher than those of Ibn Zubayr and worthy of people’s obedience.

Letters from the People of Kufah

When the people of Kufah received word of Mu‘awiyah’s death, they spread the news around and said, “Husayn and

Ibn Zubayr have refused to pledge allegiance and have gone to Mecca."

The Shi'ah had gathered in the house of Sulayman b. Surad Khuza'i, where he addressed the people: "Mu'awiyah is dead, and Husayn has refused to pledge allegiance and instead has gone to Mecca. You are his Shi'ah and the Shi'ah of his father. If you are confident that you can support him and battle against his enemies, then write to inform him. However, if you fear weakness and lack of determination, do not deceive him into risking his own life."

They replied, "No, indeed we will fight against his enemy and our lives will be sacrificed for him." He said, "Then write to him," and they wrote as follows:

> In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful
>
> To Husayn b. 'Ali from Sulayman b. Surad, Musayyib b. Najabah, Rifa'ah b. Shaddad, Habib b. Muzahir and his Shi'ah of believers and Muslims in Kufah.
>
> Peace be with you. We praise God, other that whom there is no deity. Praise be to God who destroyed your enemy, the stubborn oppressor who took over guardianship of the community, snatched

> away its authority, usurped the *fay'*[16] and took control without people's consent. Then, he killed the best ones and preserved the wicked. He made God's wealth circulate among the tyrants and the wealthy. He was destroyed just as Thamud faced destruction. We have no imam. Therefore, come—perhaps through you God shall unite us on the truth. We do not gather with Nu'man b. Bashir for Friday prayer or the prayer of the Festival. Once we learn that you have accepted to come to us, we will chase him away to Syria, God-willing. Peace and mercy of God be with you.

This letter was sent with 'Abdallah b. Sabu' Hamdani and 'Abdallah b. Wali Tamimi. They hurried forth till they reached Husayn in Mecca on 10 Ramadan. Two days later Qays b. Mushir Saydawi, 'Abd al-Rahman b. 'Abdallah b. Kadan Arhabi and 'Umarah b. 'Ubayd Saluli were sent to Husayn carrying about 150 letters. Each letter was written by one person or a group of two or four persons. After two more days, another letter was dispatched through Hani b. Hani Sabi'i and Sa'id b. 'Abdallah Hanafi with the following contents:

> In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate

[16] War booty represented by estates that were left in the hands of the inhabitants in consideration of tribute—Translator.

> To Husayn b. ‘Ali, from his Shi‘ah among the believers and Muslims. Please make haste, for the people are waiting for you. They are prepared to accept no one else but you. Come to us with speed. Peace be with you.

Shabath b. Rib‘i and others wrote another letter: “The dates have grown green and the fruit has ripened and the waters have overflown. Thus, come to an army that is ready and well-prepared. Peace be with you.”

Imam Husayn’s Reply

The messengers met Husayn, who read all the letters and probed them about the situation of the people they had left behind. Thereafter, he replied back through the messengers Hani b. Hani Sabi‘i and Sa‘id b. ‘Abdallah Hanafi, who were the last in the series of messengers:

> In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful
>
> From Husayn b. ‘Ali to the leaders of the believers and Muslims.
>
> Hani and Sa‘id have brought me your letters and they were the last two messengers who came to see me on your behalf. I have understood everything that you have

described and mentioned. The majority of the letters state: "We have no imam over us, so come that God may unite us, through you, on guidance and truth." I am sending you my brother and cousin [Muslim b. 'Aqil], who is my family's trusted representative. I have instructed him to write to me about your situation, circumstances and opinions. If he writes back to me saying that your leaders, men of distinction and merit, are united in the manner which your messengers have described—and as I have read in your letters—I will come to you quickly, God-willing. By my life, what is the function of the imam except to act according to the Book, uphold justice, profess the truth and dedicate himself to God. Peace be with you.

Muslim b. 'Aqil Sets out for Kufah

Husayn called for Muslim b. 'Aqil and dispatched him with Qays b. Mushir Saydawi, 'Umarah b. 'Ubayd and 'Abd al-Rahman b. 'Abdallah to the people of Kufah with instructions to act with piety and God-consciousness, to be cautious and discreet, and to treat the people with kindness and affection. He instructed his messenger to inform him immediately if the people are united in their commitment and support for him. Muslim went forth until he reached Medina, where he prayed at the mosque of the Prophet and bid farewell to loved ones

from his family. Then he hired two guides who belonged to the tribe of Qays. The two guides made an error on the way and went astray. On the verge of dying from thirst, the two guides told Muslim: "Take this path until you reach water." This was at Madiq in the valley of Khubayt.

Muslim Writes a Letter to Imam Husayn

Muslim wrote a letter to Husayn and dispatched it through Qays b. Mushir Saydawi:

> I left Medina accompanied by two guides and they made an error and got lost. We were overcome by acute thirst and the two guides died as a result. We proceeded further until we reached a water source, at the last moment. The watering place is at a place called Madiq in the valley of Khubayt. I take this as a bad omen. If you wish, you may relieve me of this mission and appoint someone else in my place. Peace be with you.

Imam Husayn replies to Muslim b. 'Aqil

> I suspect that your urging me to free you from the mission that I have assigned to you can only be motivated by cowardice. Thus,

> proceed on the mission that I have given to you. Peace be with you.

Upon reading the letter, Muslim said, “It is not that I fear for myself.” He resumed his journey until he arrived at a watering place belonging to the tribe of Tayyi’, with whom he sojourned. As he set out again, a man who was hunting shot a fawn that came within sights. Muslim said, “Our enemies will be killed in a similar way, God-willing.”

Chapter 3
Arrival of Muslim b. 'Aqil in Kufah

Muslim b. 'Aqil Arrives in Kufah

Muslim continued until he arrived in Kufah with three companions, Qays b. Mushir, 'Umarah b. 'Ubayd and 'Abd al-Rahman b. 'Abdallah. They stayed at the house of Mukhtar b. Abi 'Ubayd Thaqafi. The Shi'ah would visit him regularly and whenever a group of them would gather together, he would read the letter of Husayn and they would weep.

People of Kufah Pledge Allegiance

'Abis b. Abi Shabib Shakiri stood up to speak. He began by praising and glorifying God, and then said, "I do not know people's intentions—neither can I read their hearts nor would I lead you astray about them. But, by God, I can inform you of what I have decided for myself. By God, I will respond to you when you call upon me and I will fight against your enemies in concert. I will strike with my sword in your defense until I die. I expect nothing more for this than God's pleasure."

After this, Habib b. Muzahir got up and said, "May God have mercy on you. You have succinctly revealed what is in your heart. By God, I hold the same opinion as he

does." Al-Hanafi echoed these words. The Shi'ah began to visit Muslim with such frequency that his place became known, and Nu'man b. Bashir learned of his location.

Nu'man b. Bashir's Message

Upon hearing this, Nu'man ascended the pulpit. After praising and glorifying God, he said, "Servants of God, be fearful and mindful of God. Do not be hasty in causing mischief and dissension, for in this lies the destruction of men, the shedding of blood and the plundering of property. I will not fight against one who does not fight me. I will not provoke one who does not provoke me. I will neither demean you nor seize anyone on weak grounds of suspicion or allegation. However, if you make your objectives known to me, renounce your pledge of allegiance and oppose your imam, by God—other than whom there is no god—I will strike you with my sword so long as its hilt stays in my hand, even if I have no one to assist me. I hope that there are more people among you who comprehend the consequences than those who will be destroyed because of their lack of maturity."

'Abdallah b. Muslim b. Sa'id Hadrami who was a partisan of Banu Umayyah got up and said, "O governor, this matter cannot be resolved except by violence. The words you have spoken to settle the matter are uttered by one who considers himself weak." Nu'man replied, "I would prefer to be considered weak, while remaining obedient to God, than

to be considered mighty but disobedient to God." Then, he came down from the pulpit.

Yazid being Apprised of the Situation of Kufah

'Abdallah b. Muslim left the assembly and wrote a letter to Yazid b. Mu'awiyah: "Muslim b. 'Aqil has come to Kufah and the Shi'ah have pledged allegiance to him on behalf of Husayn. If you desire to retain control over Kufah then send forth a strong man who would act in accordance with your wishes against your enemy. Nu'man is a weak person and presents himself as weak." He was the first person to write to Yazid. Then, 'Umarah b. 'Uqbah wrote him something similar, as did 'Umar b. Sa'd b. Abi Waqqas.

Yazid Consults Sarjun

Yazid summons Sarjun, a *mawla*[17] of Mu'awiyah, and informs him of the situation with a view to obtain his advice. Sarjun asks Yazid, "If Mu'awiyah were alive, would you heed his advice?" He replied in the affirmative. Sarjun informs Yazid that in the estimation of Mu'awiyah there is no one better to govern Kufah than 'Ubaydallah b. Ziyad. Although upset with him, Yazid appointed him as the governor of Kufah. Yazid wrote him a letter of appointment and instructed him to intensify the search for Muslim b. 'Aqil and to kill him wherever he was found.

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[17] Patron or client.

Imam Husayn Writes to the People of Basrah

Husayn sent a letter to the people of Basrah through his *mawla*, named Sulayman. It was written on one copy but addressed to the leaders of the five divisions and the nobles:

> God chose Muhammad, peace and blessings on him, over all other creatures. He distinguished him with prophethood and selected him to convey His message. After admonishing His servants and conveying His message, God took his soul back. We are from his family and those entrusted with his authority. We are his trustees and inheritors. We have greater right than anyone else to execute the Prophet's functions. Instead, the people have arrogated to themselves our rights. We did not protest because we detested causing division and wanted the best for the community. But we knew that we were more entitled to that station than those who have usurped it. They have done some things well and pursued the truth.
>
> I send you my messenger with this letter. I invite you to the Book of God and the Sunnah of His Prophet, peace and blessings on him. The Sunnah has surely died, as

> innovations become alive. If you listen to me and obey me, I will guide you to the right path. May God's peace and mercy be with you.

All the notables who were addressed in the letter read the contents and agreed to keep it confidential with the exception of Mundhir b. Jarud, who suspected that the messenger was a spy sent by 'Ubaydallah. Thus, he brought the messenger to 'Ubaydallah in the evening before his intended departure to Kufah in the morning. 'Ubaydallah read the letter and ordered the execution of the messenger.

Address by 'Ubaydallah b. Ziyad

Then, he ascended the pulpit in Basrah and said the following after praising and glorifying God:

> By God, there is neither problem or calamity that I cannot overcome, no amount of hostility directed against me affects me. Indeed, I am a tormentor of my enemies, a fatal poison to those who fight against me. Whoever challenges the tribe of Qarah does injustice to himself.
>
> O people of Basrah, the Commander of the Faithful has appointed me governor of Kufah, and I have decided to go there in the morning. I have appointed 'Uthman b.

> Ziyad b. Abi Sufyan to govern in my absence. Stay clear of opposition and spreading calumnies and false rumors for by God if I come to know that one of you opposes him, I will surely kill him along with his *'arif*[18] and patron. I will impose collective punishment, so that you will all obey me and there will be no opponent or rebel among you. I am the son of Ibn Ziyad—whom I resemble more than I do any uncle or a cousin.[19]

Ibn Ziyad Enters Kufah

He left Basrah and set out for Kufah with Muslim b. 'Amr Bahili, Sharik b. A'war Harithi, his entourage and members of his family. When he reached Kufah, Ibn Ziyad was wearing a black turban with his face covered with a veil. The people had received news of Husayn's departure and were anticipating his imminent arrival. When Ubaydallah arrived, the people assumed that he was Husayn. The people threw their greetings to him: "Welcome, O son of the Messenger of God; your arrival is a blessed event." 'Ubaydallah was troubled at the happiness that the people expressed in seeing

[18] Leader of a locality for distribution of revenue.
[19] A reference to his father's side of the family, who were known for their harshness and ferocity. In contrast, his mother's side was famous for squandering their time with music, hunting and merrymaking.

Husayn. He was angered by their enthusiastic welcome for Husayn and said, “Should I judge you based on what you have displayed about yourselves?” When the people continued their expressions of welcome, thinking that he was Husayn, Muslim b. ‘Amr Bahili said, “Distance yourselves. This is the governor, ‘Ubaydallah b. Ziyad.” When he entered the palace and the people came to realize that he was indeed ‘Ubaydallah b. Ziyad, not Husayn, they were overcome with deep grief and sorrow.

Address of ‘Ubaydallah b. Ziyad in Kufah

When he entered the palace, a call for general prayer was given for the people to assemble. ‘Ubaydallah went out to the people and began to praise and glorify God. Then, he said, “The Commander of the Faithful, may God make him prosperous, has entrusted me with your town and your border security. He has instructed me to render justice to the oppressed and provide for the underprivileged, to be kind towards the obedient who listen to us, and to be harsh and severe with the apprehensive and the disobedient. I intend to abide by his instruction about you and to execute his covenant. I will be like a kind and benevolent father to the one who is obedient, but will take up my whip and sword against those who fail to follow my orders and oppose my authorization. Thus, let each one of you safeguard himself. Being truthful will save you from punishment.”

He came down and subjected the *'arifs* and the people to a severe test and said, “Write to me about newcomers and those requested by the Commander of the Faithful, those among you who are from the Kharijites and the instigators whose opinion incites dissent and turmoil. Whosoever writes about them will be absolved of any responsibility. But those who do not write will have to guarantee that no one among you will oppose or rebel against us. Anyone who fails to do so abandons his right of security, and his blood and property will entail no value in our sight. Any *'arif* who is negligent in reporting a troublemaker will be crucified at his house door and I will cancel the *'irafah* from the treasury, or he will be dispatched to ‘Uman (or) Zarrah.

Muslim b. ‘Aqil Moves from the House of Mukhtar to the House of Hani

When Muslim b. ‘Aqil received news about the arrival of Ubaydallah and his stern speeches to the *'arifs* and the people, he decided to leave the house of Mukhtar, which was known to many, and to move to the house of Hani b. ‘Urwah Muradi. He entered through the door and sent a messenger to ask Hani to come out. But Hani was reluctant to come out.

Muslim said to him, “I have come to you to seek neighborly protection and to be your guest.” Hani replied, “May God have mercy on you. You have placed a heavy burden on me. Were it not for your entrance into the house

and your integrity, I would have chosen to request you leave. However, I am required to offer you protection and security. A person like me could not abandon someone like you from ignorance. Come in."

The Shi'ah began to visit Muslim at the house of Hani. It is reported that during the visit to Hani's house, 18,000 people had pledged their allegiance to him on behalf of Husayn. Thus, he sent a letter to Husayn with 'Abis b. Abi Shabib Shakiri, "The exploratory mission does not negate the reported statements about the people. The people of Kufah—about 18,000-strong—have pledged allegiance. Thus, make haste to come here upon receipt of my letter, for everyone is with you and not with the Banu 'Umayyah in opinion or heart. Peace."

Ma'qil the Spy

Ibn Ziyad called his *mawla* Ma'qil and said to him, "Take this three thousand dirhams and search for Muslim b. 'Aqil and his supporters. Offer them the three thousand dirhams and say to them, 'I hope that this helps in your fight against your enemy.' Inform them that you are of the same view as they. Once you give them the money, they will believe in you and trust you. Consequently, they will not conceal anything from you and you should visit them frequently."

Ma'qil went forth until he came across Muslim b. 'Awsajah Asadi in the Great Mosque where he was praying.

Ma‘qil heard people saying that this man had pledged allegiance to Husayn. He came near him and waited for him to finish the prayers. Then he said, “O servant of God, I am a *mawla* from Syria belonging to Dhu al-Kala, who are blessed with love for this household [of the Prophet] and love for those who love them. Please accept the three thousand dirhams which I want to hand over to the person who has come to Kufah in order to gather pledges of allegiance on behalf of the son of the Messenger of God. I have desired his meeting, but so far I have not found anyone who could direct me to him or his place. While I was sitting in the mosque, I heard people saying that this man knows about this household [of the Prophet]. Thus, I have come to you to hand you this money and to arrange a meeting with your leader so that I can pledge to him my allegiance. If you wish, you may take my allegiance before I meet him.”

Muslim b. ‘Awsaja replied, “I praise God for your meeting with me; it gives me pleasure that you will get what you want. God will help the household [of the Prophet] through people like you. However, your knowledge about me regarding this affair before it matures bothers me, for I fear the barbarity of this tyrant.” He pledged allegiance before leaving, and strengthened it by oaths that he would be sincere and keep the matter concealed. He gave him whatever guarantees and assurances were necessary to satisfy him. Muslim b. ‘Awsajah told him, “Come to my house for a few days— I will obtain permission for you to meet your master.” Ma‘qil would visit Muslim b. ‘Awsajah frequently with people, who sought his permission to meet Muslim b. ‘Aqil.

Plan to Kill Ibn Ziyad

Hani had fallen sick and ‘Ubaydallah came to pay him a visit. ‘Umarah b. ‘Ubayd Saluli told Hani, “Our group is planning to kill this tyrant. Now, God has given you the ability to do so—therefore kill him.” Hani replied, “I do not want him to be killed in my house.” Thus, ‘Ubaydallah visited Hani and left without any incident.

A week had not gone by before Sharik b. A‘war fell sick. Ibn Ziyad and other governors held him in high esteem, although he was a staunch Shi’ite. ‘Ubaydallah sent a message to him that he will pay him a visit in the evening. Sharik said to Muslim, “This immoral tyrant will visit me in the evening. When he sits down, approach him and kill him. Then, take over his place in the palace, for there is no one to prevent you. If I recover from this ailment in the next few days, I will go to Basrah and take over the affairs on your behalf.”

When evening fell, ‘Ubaydallah came to visit Sharik Harithi. Muslim b. ‘Aqil was positioned in an ideal place for the attack. Sharik said to him, “Do not let him evade you while he is sitting.” Hani b. ‘Urwah rose and said to Muslim, “I do not want him to be killed in my house,” showing his disapproval of this plan. ‘Ubaydallah arrived and sat down. He asked Sharik about his ailment, “What is your illness and how long have you had this?”

When Sharik saw that Muslim had still not launched the attack, he feared that this opportunity would be missed

and thus began to recite, “What are you waiting for to salute Salma? Quench my thirst although my life is in it.” He repeated this twice or thrice. ‘Ubaydallah said, “Have you observed that he speaks deliriously?” Hani replied, “Yes, may God make you prosperous. This conduct has been visible from the early hours of the morning until now.”

‘Ubaydallah rose and left. Then, Muslim came out and Sharik asked him with incredulity, “What prevented you from killing him?” He responded, “Two reasons. One, because of Hani’s disapproval that ‘Ubaydallah be killed in his house. The second reason, a tradition that the people relate on the authority of the Prophet: ‘Faith prevents one from the act of killing and a believer should not commit murder.’ Hani retorted, “By God, if you had killed him you would have killed a grave sinner, a reprobate and an unbeliever. However, I detested that he be killed in my house.”

Ma‘qil Visits Muslim b. ‘Aqil

Ma‘qil would regularly frequent the house of Muslim b. ‘Awsajah with the aim of meeting Muslim b. ‘Aqil. Finally, he was introduced to Ibn ‘Aqil who received his pledge of allegiance and instructed Abu Thumamah Sa’idi to take possession of the money that Ma‘qil had brought. Ma‘qil would visit regularly—he was the first to arrive and the last to leave—to gather information and learn about their secret plans. Then, he would communicate all this to Ibn Ziyad.

Ibn Ziyad inquiring about Hani

Ibn Ziyad asked his entourage, “Why does Hani not visit us like before?” They replied, “He is ill.” ‘Ubaydallah summoned Muhammad b. Ash‘ath b. Qays Kindi, Asma' b. Kharijah, ‘Amr b. Hajjaj—Raw‘ah was his sister, married to Hani. ‘Ubaydallah asked them, “What keeps Hani b. ‘Urwah from paying us a visit?” They replied, “We do not know, may God make you prosperous—it appears he is ill.” He said, “I have been told that he has been cured of his illness and sits beside the door of his house. Go and meet him. Tell him he should fulfill his obligation to us, for I do not like to see a noble Arab like him treat me with disrespect.”

Hani Summoned by Ibn Ziyad

They approached Hani in the evening while he was sitting by the door of his house and asked him, “What prevents you from visiting the governor? He has talked about you and said that had he been informed of your sickness, he would have paid you a visit.” Hani said, “An ailment has prevented me.” They said, “He has been told that every evening you sit beside the door of your house. He sees this as a sign of your laziness. The authorities will not tolerate sluggishness and aloofness. We petition you to ride with us.”

He requested his clothes and dressed himself. Then, he asked for his mule and rode with them until, approaching

the palace, he had misgivings about this meeting. He asked Hassan b. Asma' b. Kharijah, "Nephew, by God, I fear this person. What is your opinion?" Hassan responded, "Uncle, by God, you have nothing to fear. Why do you accuse yourself when you know that you are innocent."

The group entered and faced 'Ubaydallah b. Ziyad, and Hani accompanied them. When Ibn Ziyad raised his head, he said, "His own two foolish legs have brought him here." When Hani approached Ibn Ziyad, Shurayh the judge was sitting beside him. Ibn Ziyad looked towards Hani and recited,

> I desire for him life and he desires for me death.
> Who from the tribe of Murad would support you, when you fight against your friend

Hani said to him, "What is the meaning of that, O governor?" Ibn Ziyad replied, "Yes, Hani b. 'Urwah. What are all these plots that you have been hatching from your house against the governor and the general Muslims? You have brought Muslim b. 'Aqil and given him shelter in your house. You have gathered arms and men for him in neighboring houses. You thought that this would remain concealed from me."

Hani said, "I have done no such thing and Muslim is not staying with me."

Ibn Ziyad thundered, "Indeed you have done so."

Hani responded, "No, I have not." And Ibn Ziyad again rejected his denial. The accusations and denial went on for some time until Ibn Ziyad called out his spy, Ma'qil. He came out and stood beside him. Ibn Ziyad asked him, "Do you know this man?" He replied in the affirmative.

At this point Hani realized that Ma'qil had been a spy planted to gather information about them. He said, "Listen to me and believe in what I say. By God, I do not tell lies. By God, who has no other god, I did not invite him to my house and had no knowledge of his mission until I saw him sitting beside the door of my house. He asked my consent to stay with me and I was too embarrassed to reject his request. Thus, I was responsible to offer him protection. I took him into my house and gave him food and shelter. Thereafter, his mission progressed as you have been informed. If you want, I can give you a binding sacred oath, and whatever else will give you confidence, that I mean no harm to you. If you wish, I will give you a security to place in your hand to guarantee that I come back to you. Then, I will go to him and instruct him to leave my house for a different place of his choice—and thus will be absolved of the responsibility of offering him protection and security."

Ibn Ziyad said, "No, by God, you will never part from me unless you bring him to me." Hani responded, "No, by God, I shall never bring him to you. Do you expect me to bring my guest for you to kill?" Ibn Ziyad repeated his insistence and Hani rejected his proposal.

When their argument had gone on for some time, Muslim b. ‘Amr Bahili rose and said, “May God make the governor prosperous. Give me a private moment with him so that I may speak with him.” He told Hani, “Come here so I may talk to you.” He got up and they both went to a spot away from Ibn Ziyad but still within sight of Ibn Ziyad—when they raised their voices he could hear what they were saying, when they lowered their voices their conversation was inaudible to Ibn Ziyad. Muslim said to Hani, “O Hani, I beseech you in the name of God not to kill yourself and bring about calamity on your community and family. By God, I hold you too dear to see you killed. This man, Muslim b. ‘Aqil, is the cousin of the Umayyads and therefore they will not kill him or cause him harm. Thus, hand him over to Ibn Ziyad and it will not be considered a blameworthy or cowardly act because you are only handing him over to the authorities.”

Hani responded, “Indeed, by God, it would be a source of shame and disgrace if I were to hand over someone who is my guest, under my protection—as long as I am alive, in sound health, and see and hear. I have numerous strong followers, and by God, even if I was all alone without any helpers, I would not hand him over—I would sooner die protecting him.” Hani saw that his clan was agitated. He once again implored God and repeated his statement that he would not hand over Muslim b. ‘Aqil.

Ibn Ziyad heard this and commanded that Hani be brought close to him. He told Hani to either bring Muslim b. ‘Aqil or else face execution. Hani retorted, “In that case

there will be a lot of flashing of swords around your place," thinking that his clan can hear him.

Ibn Ziyad replied, "You are in manifest error. Are you seeking to frighten me with the flashing of swords?" He ordered that Hani be brought closer to him. Upon this, Ibn Ziyad began to strike his face with his cane and continued beating his nose, forehead and cheek until he broke his nose and the blood spurted onto his clothes. The flesh from his cheeks and forehead was splattered over his beard and this beating continued until the cane broke. Hani attempted to get hold of the sword of one of the guards, who pulled away and prevented him from getting it. Ibn Ziyad cried out, "Have you become a Kharijite today? You have made it lawful for us to take your life. Take him away and drop him in one of the rooms, lock the doors and place guards on him."

Asma' b. Kharijah rose up and protested, "Are we to be regarded as deceptive messengers? You commanded us to bring Hani to you for a meeting only to discover that when he came in your presence you broke his face and nose and spilled his blood onto his beard. Now you are determined to kill him." Ibn Ziyad replied, "Are you still here?" He ordered him to be hit and shaken up. Then, he was confined to prison.

Muhammad b. Ash'ath said that they were pleased with the governor's decree and judgment, be it in their favor or against them, because the governor was only meting out fair punishment.

However, ‘Amr b. Hajjaj received a report that Hani had been killed. Therefore, he gathered a significant force from the tribe of Madhhij and surrounded the palace. Then, he cried out, “I am ‘Amr b. Hajjaj, and these are the prominent men and soldiers of Madhhij who have not reneged on their obedience or seceded from the community. But, it has been told to us that one of our member has been killed, and this is a grave matter indeed.”

‘Ubaydallah was informed of this matter and he instructed Shurayh to go and see Hani, then to come out and report to the people that he was alive—not dead—as he had just seen him. Shurayh went in to look at him. With this, Hani said, “O God, O Muslims, has my clan been destroyed? Where are the people of religion and the people of this town? Have they all disappeared and left me alone against their enemy and the son of their enemy?”

Blood was flowing onto his beard. When he heard the commotion at the door of the palace and realized that Shurayh was about to go out, he pursued him and said, “O Shurayh, I think that those are the voices of the tribe of Madhhij and my supporters among the Muslims. If ten people could manage to enter, they could free me from here.”

Shurayh went out to the anxious public with Humayd b. Bukayr Ahmari who was Ibn Ziyad's close guard. He said, “When the governor heard about your views and speeches regarding your colleague, he instructed me to go to him and report back to you about his state. I saw him and I

inform you that he is alive. The report which you heard about his death is not true." 'Amr b. Hajjaj and his companions praised God and dispersed when they heard that Hani had not been killed.

Address of Ibn Ziyad after Striking Hani

'Ubaydallah was afraid that the public may rise against him for his mistreatment of Hani. He went out with his nobles, police and entourage to address the crowd. He ascended the pulpit and, after praising and glorifying God, said, "O people, hold firmly to your commitment to obey God and your imams. Do not instigate dissent and division, for you will perish, be humiliated, killed, severely tried and denied of privileges. The one who tells you the truth is your brother; the one who has warned you has been freed from his obligation."

Muslim b. 'Aqil Launches Attack

'Abdallah b. Khazim was the first eye-witness reporter to Muslim b. 'Aqil, who informed him about what had happened to Hani at the palace at the hands of Ibn Ziyad. When he came to see him, he saw that some women had gathered together and grieving, "O tribulation! O grief!"

Upon hearing the news from Abdallah, Muslim gave instruction to give out a call to assemble all his supporters. He had numerous followers in close vicinity and a total of 18,000 people had pledged allegiance. Of these, 4,000 were nearby and assembled.

Muslim entrusted 'Ubaydallah b. 'Amr with the command of the Kindah group, and told him to proceed in front of him with his horse. He entrusted Muslim b. 'Awsajah Asadi with the Madhhij and Asad group, and instructed him to dismount his horse and walk with the foot soldiers. He entrusted Abu Thumamah Sa'idi for the Tamim and Hamdan group. He entrusted 'Abbas b. Ja'dah to the Medina group. Then they proceeded to go towards the palace.

The nobles approached the palace from the side of the door adjacent to the building of the Byzantines. 'Ubaydallah b. Ziyad summoned Kathir b. Shihab b. Husayn Harithi. He instructed him to go out in search of the members from the clan of Madhhij who would obey him and to circulate around Kufah to convince people to abandon their support of Ibn 'Aqil, to terrify them of war and forewarn them of stern punishment from the authorities. Likewise, Muhammad b. Ash'ath was sent out to convince and appease the Kindah and Hadramawt with a guarantee of security and protection to those who join him. Similar assignments were given to other individuals. 'Ubaydallah gave the standard to Shabath b. Rib'i and said, "Be kind and benevolent to the people who obey you, and increase their monetary reward and status. In contrast, intimidate and

terrify the disobedient with deprivation and stern punishment. Inform them that the army from Syria is to arrive soon."

The first one to speak was Kathir b. Shihab who said, "O people, return back to your families and do not rush towards evil. Do not subject yourselves to death, for it is the army of the Commander of the Faithful, Yazid, that approaches. The governor has made a covenant with God to deprive you of your state stipend, if you continue fighting him or fail to disperse by nightfall. He will deliver a devastating blow to you in the military campaign; he will hold the healthy people responsible for the sick and the ones who are present responsible for those absent—until not a single instigator shall remain among you who has not tasted the bitter consequences of what his hands have wrought." The other nobles conveyed similar ideas. When the people heard these stern messages, they began to withdraw and leave.

Women came to their sons and brothers to advise them to leave saying that there were enough men available to help Muslim b. 'Aqil. Men would come to their sons and brothers with the following message, "The Syrian army will arrive tomorrow and why should you get entangled in this war and evil. Go away and retreat."

Muhammad b. Ash'ath went out until he arrived at the houses of Banu 'Umarah. He noticed 'Umarah b. Salkhab Azdi carrying arms and intending to go in support of Ibn 'Aqil. Muhammad b. Ash'ath apprehended 'Umarah and sent him to Ibn Ziyad, who put him in prison. Muslim b. 'Aqil sent out 'Abd al-Rahman b. Shurayh along with a

strong contingent from the mosque against Muhammad b. Ash‘ath. Qa‘qa, who was in the vicinity, took note of the strong army of Ibn ‘Aqil and advised Ibn Ash‘ath to steer clear of them. Consequently, Ibn Ash‘ath retreated without any confrontation.

Muslim b. ‘Aqil Abandoned

‘Abbas Jadali reports: When we left with Ibn ‘Aqil, marching towards the palace, we were 4,000-strong. When we approached the palace, the number of supporters had shrunk to 300 men. People continued to withdraw and disperse, such that by evening Ibn ‘Aqil had only 30 followers at the mosque, praying with him. When he saw this dismal state of affairs, he decided to head towards the gates of Kindah, and his support level was reduced to 10 men. When he left the gate no one was with him.

Ibn ‘Aqil searched around to see if someone could guide him on the road or escort him to a house or help him find protection from an enemy. He roamed around the alleys of Kufah not knowing where he was going, until he arrived at the area where dwelled Banu Janalah of Kindah. He continued to walk until he reached the door of a woman named Taw‘ah. She had been a slave-wife of Ash‘ath b. Qays, who freed her. Later, she married Asid Hadrami and gave birth to a son called Bilal. Her son had gone out with the people and she was waiting for him to return.

Ibn ‘Aqil greeted the woman and she returned the greeting. He said to her, “O servant of God, bring me some water.” She entered the house and brought him some water.

He sat down to quench his thirst. She took the empty vessel back inside and came out, finding Ibn ‘Aqil still by her doorstep. She said to him, “O servant of God, have you not quenched your thirst?” He replied in the affirmative. She said, “Then, go back to your family.”

There was silence from him. So, she repeated her utterance. He remained silent. For the third time she said, “Fear the Glorious God, O servant of God. Return back to your family and may God give you good health. It is not appropriate for you to sit at my door. I will not permit you to stay here any longer.”

He rose and said, “O servant of God, I have no house or family in this town. Can you show me compassion and kindness which I may be able to reciprocate in the future?” She asked him to identify himself, and he replied that he was Muslim b. ‘Aqil, deceived and cheated by the false promises of the people. She asked him again if he was Muslim. When he replied in the affirmative, she asked him to enter her house and took him to a separate room. She spread out a carpet and offered him food, but he ate nothing.

Shortly thereafter, her son came back and he saw her going to the rooms back and fro. He said to her, “By God, I am led to suspect you are concealing an important affair from me because you go in and out of room.” She replied, “My son, do not pay any attention to this.” He insisted to be told, but she asked him to go on with his own business and to refrain from posing any questions. He persisted until she was forced to tell him, “O my son, never

convey what I am about to tell you to anyone." She took from him a sworn oath and promise before telling him about Muslim b. 'Aqil. The boy went to bed without saying anything.

Ibn Ziyad's Situation

After the voices of Ibn 'Aqil's followers had not been heard for a long time, Ibn Ziyad told his supporters, "Look out to see if any of the companions of Ibn 'Aqil can be seen." They did so but found no one. Then he asked them to search more thoroughly, as the people may be hiding to launch a surprise attack. His supporters sent down the torches they carried in their arms to see if anyone was hiding in the shadows. At times enough light was emitted from the torch, at other times inadequate light.

After an exhaustive search and confidant that no one was lurking in the darkness, they informed Ibn Ziyad. He instructed 'Amr b. Nafi' to give out a call that guarantee of security would be granted only to those who participate in the night prayers in the mosque among the police, *'arifs*, supporters and soldiers. Hardly an hour went by when the mosque became crowded with people. Hasin b. Tamim, a member of Ibn Ziyad's police force, told him, "You must either lead the prayers or appoint someone else in your place—since, in my opinion, you will be exposed to an attack from one of your enemies." Ibn Ziyad ordered him to place a guard behind him and monitor the area. Thereafter, he opened the door leading to the mosque and entered with his companions to lead the prayers.

Address by Ibn Ziyad after Abandonment of Muslim

After prayers, Ibn Ziyad ascended the pulpit and praised and glorified God. Then he said, “In his ignorance and foolhardiness, Ibn ‘Aqil tried to oppose and rebel against me, as you are aware. The person in whose house we find him will forfeit security and protection. The one who brings him to us will be awarded his *diyah*.[20] Fear God, O servants of God, and preserve your promise of obedience and pledge of allegiance. Do not expose yourselves to danger. O Hasin b. Tamim, may your mother grieve your loss, should any of the checkpoints of Kufah be open or this man escape without being brought to me. I entrust you with the authority over the houses of the people of Kufah. Send out inspectors in the roads and alleys. In the morning, make people vacate their houses, so that you can conduct a thorough search and bring this man to me.” Ibn Ziyad came down from the pulpit and returned to the palace after giving ‘Amr b. Hurayth the standard and authority over the people.

Ibn Ziyad in the Morning

In the morning, Ibn Ziyad had a session and gave people permission to come and see him. Muhammad b. Ash‘ath approached him and Ibn Ziyad said to him, “Welcome to the

[20] Indemnity or compensation.

one from whom neither treachery nor suspicion can arise." He made him sit next to him.

The same morning, Bilal b. Asid, the son of that aged lady who had given shelter to Ibn ‘Aqil, informed ‘Abd al-Rahman b. Muhammad b. Ash‘ath that Ibn ‘Aqil was staying at his mother's house. ‘Abd al-Rahman approached his father and conveyed the news secretly while he was in the company of Ibn Ziyad. The latter asked him about what was mentioned to him. He replied that it was information that Ibn ‘Aqil is staying in one of their houses. Ibn Ziyad poked a cane on one of his side and told him to get up and fetch him without delay.

Ibn Ash‘ath's Campaign to Kill Muslim b. ‘Aqil

Ibn Ziyad sent out ‘Amr b. Hurayth, his representative for leading prayers at the mosque, to send forth sixty or seventy men from the tribe of Qays with Ibn Ash‘ath. He was reluctant to send people from the tribe of Ibn Ash‘ath, because he knew that they would find it distasteful to arrest a man like Ibn ‘Aqil. Thus, with ‘Amr b. ‘Ubaydallah b. ‘Abbas Sulami, he sent sixty or seventy men from the tribe of Qays. They arrived at the house where Ibn ‘Aqil was staying.

Muslim b. ‘Aqil Comes Out

When Muslim heard the sound of the horse's hooves and the voices of men, he realized that they had come for him. He moved towards them with his sword, but they launched a massive attack and entered the house. He struck at them fiercely and was able to force their withdrawal from the house. They resumed their attack and Muslim retaliated in kind.

Bukayr b. Humran Ahmari struck Muslim on his mouth, inflicting a cut that extended from his upper lip to the lower. He also took out two of his teeth. In return, Muslim delivered a severe blow on the head and another blow that cut his nerve near his shoulder, almost penetrating his stomach.

Offer of Security

When they saw this, they began to look down at Muslim from the top of their houses, hurling stones at him and lighting firewood. In response, he charged them in the open alleys, his sword drawn. Muhammad b. Ash'ath approached him and said, "O young man, you can have a guarantee of security. Do not cause yourself to perish." Muslim continued his attack, reciting,

> I swear that I will not be killed except as a free person,
> Though I consider death something repulsive.
> Every person will one day confront evil,

And the cold will be mixed with the bitter hot.
The soul will become tranquil and free of any fear,
I suspect that I will be deceived and duped.

Muslim b. ‘Aqil Apprehended

Muhammad b. Ash‘ath assured Muslim that he would not be cheated, betrayed or duped, and reminded him that the Umayyads were his cousins and thus would not kill him or subject him to physical punishment. Muslim was exhausted after the hail of stones thrown at him and from the fighting. Thus, he put his back against the wall of the house. Muhammad b. Ash‘ath approached him and guaranteed him security and safe passage. Muslim asked him if it was a bona fide guarantee; he replied in the affirmative. The people around him also repeated that Muslim had been granted security. Muslim accepted their guarantees and told them that had they not offered this guarantee he would not have accepted the truce.

A mule was brought to him and he mounted it, as they surrounded him and snatched away the sword from him. At this, he felt a sense of hopelessness. With tears in his eyes he said, “This is the first act of betrayal.” Muhammad b. Ash‘ath replied, “I hope no difficulty falls upon you.”

Shocked, Muslim asked, “Has it been changed to mere hope? What happened to your guarantees? We

belong to God and to Him is our return." He began to cry and lament. 'Amr b. 'Ubaydallah b. 'Abbas chided him, "One who seeks out the like of which you seek should not cry when confronted with the consequences." Muslim replied, "By God, I do not weep for myself or mourn for my death, although I do not welcome destruction. I lament for my family who are on their way and for Husayn and his family."

Last Will and Testament of Muslim to Ibn Ash'ath

Muslim approached Muhammad b. Ash'ath and said, "O servant of God, I can see that you will not be able to fulfill the guarantee of security that you had given to me. However, would you have the decency to dispatch a messenger with my message to Husayn? I am certain that he is already heading towards you today or will be departing soon with his family. That was the reason for my anxiety and anguish. The letter should read, 'Ibn 'Aqil has sent me to you to inform you that he has been taken prisoner and does not feel that you should approach Kufah, where you will be killed. Therefore, you must go back with your family—do not allow the Kufans to deceive you. For they were the same people who followed your father. He tried to disassociate from them, if even through death or killing. The Kufans have lied to you and to me. He has no sound opinion who is deceitful.'"

Ibn Ash‘ath responded emphatically, “By God, I will certainly do that, and will also inform Ibn Ziyad that I have given you a guarantee of safe passage and security.”

Muslim at the Door of the Palace

Extremely thirsty, Muhammad b. Ash‘ath went with Ibn ‘Aqil to the door of the palace. People waited by the door of the palace for permission to enter. A jug of water had been placed there. Muslim asked for a drink to quench his thirst, but Muslim b. ‘Amr Bahili replied, “Do you see how cold it is. By God, you will sooner taste the scorching heat of the hell-fire than get a chance to taste a single drop of it.”

Ibn ‘Aqil said, “Shame on you. Who are you?” He replied, “I am the one who realized the truth when you rejected it, the one who was loyal to his imam when you betrayed him, the one who obeyed him when you disobeyed and opposed him. I am Muslim b. ‘Amr Bahili.” Muslim b. ‘Aqil said, “May your mother be deprived of you. How harsh and insensitive you are. How hard-hearted you are, O man of Bahilah. You are more deserving for an eternal stay in the scorching hell-fire than I am.” Then he sat down, resting his back against the wall.

‘Amr b. Hurayth Makhzumi instructed one of his boys, named Sulayman, to bring him a jug with a napkin and a cup. He poured water into the cup and offered Muslim to drink it. Whenever he tried to drink from it, the water turned into blood. On his third attempt to drink the water, two of his teeth dropped into the cup and he said, “Praise belongs to

God. If this water had been earmarked for me, I would have drunk it."

Muhammad b. Ash'ath sought permission to enter. When permission was granted, Muslim b. 'Aqil was taken in to see Ibn Ziyad, but he did not salute him as the governor. The guard questioned Muslim, "Do you not greet the governor?" Muslim replied, "If he desires my death, what is the point of giving him the salutation of peace? If he does not desire my death then the salutation of peace would be excessive for him." Ibn Ziyad said, "By my life, you will certainly be killed." Muslim said, "Is it really true?" Ibn Ziyad replied in the affirmative. Since death was imminent, Muslim requested for a person from his tribe to carry out his will, and Ibn Ziyad consented.

Last Will and Testament of Muslim to 'Umar b. Sa'd

Muslim looked towards 'Ubaydallah and among them was seated 'Umar b. Sa'd. He said, "O 'Umar, there is kinship between you and me. I have a need which you can fulfill, but it has to be kept a secret." 'Umar prevented Muslim from mentioning it, and when Ibn Ziyad saw this he told 'Umar not to refrain from carrying out the wishes of his cousin.

Then, 'Umar stood up and sat in a place where he would be visible to Ibn Ziyad. Muslim said, "I owe a debt of seven hundred dirhams, which I took when I arrived in Kufah. Please discharge this debt on my behalf. Attend to

my dead body—retrieve it from Ibn Ziyad and give it a burial. Finally, dispatch a messenger to Husayn to advise him to go back, for I had sent him a letter informing him that people support him. He must be on his way to Kufah."

'Umar b. Sa'd who had been asked by Muslim to carry out his last will and testament came to Ibn Ziyad and informed him of what Muslim had confided in him. Ibn Ziyad replied, "The faithful would not betray your trust but the traitor can be relied on. As far as discharging the debt is concerned, it belongs to you and we will not prevent you from doing with it whatever you like. As for Husayn, as long as he has no evil intentions against us we will not cause him any harm. But if he seeks to cause us harm, we will not hold back. With regards to the corpse, it makes no difference to us what you do with it after his death."[21]

Muslim and Ibn Ziyad

Ibn Ziyad said to Muslim, "Ibn 'Aqil, before your arrival here the people were united in their opinion, and now the division and disunity you have brought causes them to attack each other." Muslim replied, "Surely, it is not so. I did not come on my own. Rather, the people of the town alleged that your father had killed eminent men among them and shed their

[21] Another version of the report says that Ibn Ziyad rejected the request to hand over the body of Muslim b. 'Aqil, arguing that Muslim had betrayed him and sought his destruction—Translator.

blood. You appointed governors over them like the governors of Chosroe and Caesar. In response, we came to them to promote justice and to invite people to live in accordance with the Book."

Ibn Ziyad interjected, "Why should you involve yourself, you great sinner! Have you not been occupying yourself, until recently, with wine-drinking in Medina?" Muslim responded, "I drink wine? By God, God knows that you are untruthful and utter statements without any knowledge. I am not as you describe. It is better to be called a wine-drinker than one who wallows in or sucks the blood of Muslims, who kills people when God has forbidden it, who takes the life of a soul who has committed no murder, who sheds sacred blood, who kills from hostility and suspicion while he entertains and pleases himself as if he has done nothing evil."

Ibn Ziyad exclaimed, "O grave sinner, your own soul wished for something of which you were unworthy, and thus God denied it to you." Muslim inquired, "Who is worthy of the post then, Ibn Ziyad?" He replied, "The Commander of the Faithful, Yazid." Muslim said, "Praise belongs to God in all states. We will submit to God's judgment between us and you."

Ibn Ziyad remarked, "You imagine that you have a say in the matter." Muslim replied, "It is not a supposition but certainty." Ibn Ziyad burst out, "May God kill me if I fail to kill you in a manner that no one else has been killed before in Islam." Muslim replied, "It is known that you will never

abandon sinful murder, torturous punishment, repulsive practices, and vile domination. No one is more worthy of carrying this out than you." Ibn Ziyad began to curse him and Husayn, 'Ali and 'Aqil.

Martyrdom of Muslim b. 'Aqil

Ibn Ziyad said, "Take him away to the very top of the palace and sever his head. Then hurl down his body after throwing down his head." Muslim said to Ibn Ash'ath, "By God, if you had not guaranteed me security I would not have surrendered. Thus, rise up with your sword and fulfill your promise." Ibn Ash'ath approached Ibn Ziyad and informed him of the guarantee of security that was offered to him. The latter replied, "What do you have to do with offering guarantees of security, as if we sent you for that mission. In reality, we sent you only to bring him to us." Ibn Ash'ath stayed quiet and did not reply.

Ibn Ziyad summoned for the person whose head and shoulder had been struck by Ibn 'Aqil. He instructed this person to go to the rooftop of the palace and cut off the head of Muslim. He went up with Muslim, who was saying "God is Great," and seeking forgiveness and sending blessings upon God's angels and his messengers, saying: "O God, judge between us and a community that tempted us, deceived us and humiliated us." He was taken by Bukayr

Ahmari to a place overlooking the market of butchers in the present time. His head was severed and his body hurled down after his head.

After killing Muslim, Bukayr b. Humran Ahmari came down. Ibn Ziyad asked him if he had killed Muslim, to which he replied affirmatively. Ibn Ziyad asked him what Muslim was saying when going up to the palace. He replied that Muslim was saying "God is Great", glorifying Him and seeking forgiveness. "When I approached him to kill him he said, 'O God, judge between us and a community that tempted us, deceived us, humiliated us and killed us.' Thereafter, I told him to come close to me and struck him a blow that was not sufficient, so I struck him a second blow and killed him." His head was brought to Ibn Ziyad.

Martyrdom of Hani b. 'Urwah

As the events of Muslim b. 'Aqil unfolded in the way that they did, Ibn Ziyad refused to honor his promise to Muhammad b. Ash'ath, who feared vengeance from Hani's tribe, since he had brought Muslim to Ibn Ziyad [on the promise] that he would not kill Hani. Instead, he gave an order that Hani be taken to the market and his head severed. His hands were tied. He arrived at a place in the market that sold sheep, where he cried out, "O Madhhij! There is no one from the tribe of Madhhij today to rescue me? How can I get to the Madhhij?"

When he realized that there was no one to help him, he wrested his hands free of the bonds and said, “Is there no stick, knife, stone or bone with which one can defend himself?” They all pounced on him and tied him again but more tightly and said to him, “Stretch out your neck.” Hani replied, “I am not generous in giving away my life and I will not assist you in taking my life away.” A Turkish *mawla* of ‘Ubaydallah b. Ziyad by the name of Rashid struck him with a sword but it caused him no harm. Hani screamed, “To God is the return. O God, the return is to Your Mercy and Your Paradise.” Then, Rashid struck him for the second time and killed him. Thereafter, he took his head to Ibn Ziyad.

Heads of Muslim and Hani Sent to Yazid

Ibn Ziyad sent the heads of Muslim and Hani to Yazid through two messengers, Hani b. Abi Hayyah Wadi‘i and Zubayr b. Arwah. He instructed ‘Amr b. Nafi‘ to compose a letter for Yazid explaining the situation regarding Muslim and Hani. Ibn Ziyad was angered by the prolix letter and remarked, “What is the point of this long-winded and excessive letter?” Instead, write:

> Praise belongs to God for bestowing on the Commander of the Faithful what is due to him and providing him with the necessary means to overcome his enemy. I inform the Commander of the Faithful, may God be generous with him, Muslim b. ‘Aqil had sought refuge in the house of Hani b. ‘Urwah

> Muradi. I sent out spies and concealed agents until I was able to dupe them and bring them out. God gave me power over them and consequently I had them apprehended and severed their heads. I have sent to you their heads with Hani b. Abi Hayyah and Zubayr b. Arwah, who are to be counted among your sincere, attentive and obedient followers. Let the Commander of the Faithful ask them whatever he likes about this affair for they are well informed about the incident. They are truthful, understanding and righteous. Peace.

Yazid replied to him:

> You have not exceeded the limits that I desired. You acted with resoluteness and initiated the attack with a courage that was not weakened by emotions. You have been successful and equal to the task. You have confirmed my supposition about you and my good faith in you. I had summoned your messengers for questioning and found that their views and opinions match what you had mentioned. Receive both of them with kindness based on my recommendation. I have been told that Husayn has left for Iraq. Set up checkpoints and lookouts, and be on

> guard against suspicious individuals. Apprehend on suspicion, but do not kill unless they fight against you. Write to me should there be any news. Peace and mercy of God be with you.

The rising of Muslim b. ‘Aqil took place on Tuesday,[22] 8 Dhulhijjah 60 A.H. Husayn departed from Mecca on the same day.

Upon the death of Muslim b. ‘Aqil and Hani b. ‘Urwah, the following ode was composed by Farazdaq as a eulogy:

> If you do not realize what death is, then learn by looking
> at Hani and Ibn ‘Aqil in the market.
> One whose face is smashed by the sword
> and another killed from a great height.
>
> It was the governor’s order that led to their destruction
> and they became historical legends for those who travel from any direction.
>
> You see a corpse whose color has changed because of death
> and an abundant loss of blood.

[22] It actually corresponds to Sunday and not Tuesday—Translator.

He was a young man with greater modesty, rather than a bashful young woman
yet more determined than the sharp edge of a sword.

Is Asma[23] riding on a slow-paced mount with security
while Madhhij pursue him to seek vengeance?

All Murad surround him
overlooking as questioner or questioned.

If you do not seek vengeance for your two brothers
then be whores, be content with little.

Departure of Imam Husayn from Mecca

Husayn left Medina for Mecca on Sunday in the month of Rajab with two days remaining in the year 60 A.H. He arrived in Mecca on Friday, 3 Sha‘ban. He stayed in Mecca for the months of Sha‘ban, Ramadan, Shawwal and Dhulqa‘dah. Then, he left Mecca on the 8 Dhulhijjah on Tuesday[24]—the Day of Tarwiyyah, which coincided with the uprising of Muslim b. ‘Aqil.

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[23] Asma b. Kharijah was one of the person sent by Ibn Ziyad to apprehend Hani—Translator.
[24] It actually corresponds to Sunday and not Tuesday—Translator.

Meeting of Ibn Zubayr with Imam Husayn

Ibn Zubayr came to Husayn and said, "I do not understand why we have left things to these people and are at their mercy—when we are the sons of emigrants, more entitled to guardianship over the affairs than they. Tell me about your plan of action." Husayn replied, "By God, I have pondered deeply about going towards Kufah as my Shi'ah, and the eminent members of these people have written to me. I seek the best choice from God."

Ibn Zubayr said, "If I were to have the same kind of followers over there that you have, I would choose no other option besides Kufah." Concerned that Husayn might suspect his motives for this strong recommendation of Kufah, he added, "However, if you were to stay in the Hijaz and pursue your mission, there would be no one to oppose you, God willing." Then he rose and left. Husayn said, "There is nothing in this world more pleasing for him than my departure from the Hijaz to Iraq, for he knows well that he will have no say in this matter while I am here. The people will not hold him equal to me in status. He would be pleased to see me leave Mecca and the path cleared for him."

Ibn 'Abbas with Imam Husayn

When Husayn had decided to go to Kufah, 'Abdallah b. 'Abbas visited him and said, "Cousin, people are circulating

reports that you are planning to go to Iraq. Please explain your plan to me." Husayn replied, "I have decided to leave for Kufah one of these days, by the will of God Exalted."

Ibn 'Abbas remarked, "May God save you from that decision. Explain to me, may God have mercy on you, are you planning to go to a people who have expelled and killed their governor, seized control of their town and thrown out their enemies? If they have done so, then by all means go to them. However, if they have only invited you to come while their governor dominates them and the tax collectors are able to impose taxes on their properties, then they are only inviting you to engage in war and fighting. I have no confidence in them. I suspect that they may be deceiving and lying to you, and that they may oppose you and abandon you. If they turn against you, they will be the most violent ones." Husayn replied, "I seek the best choice from God and will see what transpires."

Second Conversation of Ibn 'Abbas with Imam Husayn

That same evening or the following day, 'Abdallah b. 'Abbas came to Husayn and said, "Cousin, I admonish you to exercise patience—though I do not have this quality. I fear that in this mission you will be destroyed and uprooted. Surely, the people of Iraq are deceitful and unreliable, thus do not go anywhere near them. Instead, stay in this land for you are the preeminent man of Hijaz. If the Iraqis truly want

you to go there, as they allege, then write to them that they should first evict their enemies and then you will come to them. If you are determined to leave Mecca then go to Yemen, which has fortresses and canyons. It is a vast land. From there you can invite people to support you. In this way, I hope that you will attain what you desire with ease and safety."

Husayn replied, "Cousin, by God I know for sure that you are sincerely concerned about me, but I have taken a decision and am determined to undertake this journey." Ibn 'Abbas appealed, "If your trip is inevitable, then at least do not take your womenfolk and your children—for, by God, I fear you will be killed…"

'Umar b. 'Abd al-Rahman Talks with Imam Husayn

'Umar b. 'Abd al-Rahman reports: When Husayn had made the necessary arrangements for his imminent trip to Iraq, I went to visit him and began by glorifying and praising God. Then, I said, "Cousin, I have come to you to offer some advise, if you consider me worthy of giving advise to you. If not, you should not pay attention to what I intend to say." Husayn said, "Speak. By God, I do not consider that you have an evil motive or are inspired towards what is reprehensible in any matter or action."

'Umar said, "I have come to learn that you intend to travel to Iraq and I am concerned about your forthcoming

journey. You will be coming to a land that has the support of the tax collectors and leaders. Further, they have control over the public treasury. The people are enslaved to the dirham and dinar. Thus, I am not confident about your safety, for it is possible that those who promised you support would fight against you, and those who claim to love you more than him would fight against you with him." Husayn replied, "May God give you the best of rewards, cousin. By God, I know that you have offered sincere advice and have spoken with intelligence. Whatever is decreed to happen will happen, whether I pay heed to your advice or not. In my estimation, you are a most praiseworthy consultant and a most sincere advisor."

Ibn Zubayr's Last Conversation with Imam Husayn

'Abdallah b. Sulaym and Madhri b. Mushma'ill reported: We had arrived in Mecca on the Day of Tarwiyyah to perform the pilgrimage (*hajj*). We were close to Husayn and 'Abdallah b. Zubayr around mid-morning, between the Hijr and the door of the Ka'bah. We approached them and heard Ibn Zubayr saying to Husayn, "If you wish to stay and rise, you could take control of the affair. We will give you assistance, support, advice and allegiance." Husayn replied, "My father told me a leader will be executed in Mecca who will violate the sanctity of the precincts. I do not wish to be that person." Ibn Zubayr said, "Listen to what I have to say, son of Fatimah."

I strained to hear on but he spoke in secrecy. Then he turned towards us and asked, "Do you know what Ibn Zubayr just said to me?" We replied, "We do not know. May God sacrifice us for you." Husayn said, "He told me to rise up in this mosque and he would gather people around me for support. By God, I would much rather be killed a short distance away from the sacred environs than be killed within the sacred precinct. I swear by God, they would apprehend and seize me even if I were located in a deep snake hole, just to carry out their wishes. By God, they will violate me as the Jews violated the Sabbath."

Encounter with ‘Amr b. Sa‘id

When Husayn left Mecca, the messengers of ‘Amr b. Sa‘id objected. They were under the command of Yahya b. Sa‘id. They demanded that Husayn return, but he refused to listen to them and continued onward on his journey. There was a confrontation between the two groups and the partisans of Husayn resisted fiercely. They said to him, "O Husayn, do you not fear God for splintering from the community and causing a division and disunity among them?" Husayn replied with the Qur'anic verse, "To me my deeds and to you your deeds. You are not responsible for my actions and I am not responsible for yours."[25]

[25] Qur'an, 10:41.

‘Ali b. Husayn says: When we left Mecca ‘Abdallah b. Ja‘far b. Abi Talib wrote a letter to Husayn and sent it through his two sons, ‘Awn and Muhammad:

> I petition you in the name of God to return back to Mecca once you read my letter, for I am much concerned that the direction you have taken may lead to your destruction and the effacement of your family. If you were to be killed today, the light of earth would extinguish, for you are the banner of the well-guided, the hope of the believers. Do not make haste in your journey, as I am coming shortly upon the receipt of this letter. Peace.

‘Abdallah b. Ja‘far stood up and went to ‘Amr b. Sa‘id b. ‘As for dialogue and said to him, “Write a letter to Husayn in which you offer him guarantee of security and favor him with compassion and affection. Give him assurance and trust in your letter and ask him to return. Perhaps he will be reassured by this and return. Send the letter with your brother Yahya b. Sa‘id. He is more likely to provide reassurance to Husayn and will demonstrate that it is a serious offer from you.”

‘Amr b. Sa‘id said to him, “Write to him whatever you desire, then bring it to me to affix my seal on it.” ‘Abdallah b. Ja‘far wrote:

> In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful

> From ‘Amr b. Sa‘id to Husayn b. ‘Ali.
>
> I plead God to divert you from what will lead to your destruction and guide you to what will give you guidance. I have come to know that you are heading towards Iraq. I seek refuge in God for you from disunity, for I fear that you are headed towards destruction. I have sent ‘Abdallah b. Ja‘far and Yahya b. Sa‘id to you and implore you to come to me with them. You will receive from me a guarantee of safety, affection, compassion and good-neighborly protection. God is my witness, guarantor, overlooker and sovereign authority. Peace be with you.

Husayn wrote back as follows:

> One who invites people to God, Mighty and Exalted, and good deeds, and who is a Muslim, does not sow dissension and disunity in the community of God and His messenger. You have invited me to embrace your guarantee of security, kindness and compassion. However, the best guarantee is God’s. God will not offer a guarantee of security on the Day of Resurrection to someone who is unmindful of Him in this world. We plead for God’s security fearfully in this world, that He may grant us the guarantee of security on the Day of

> Resurrection. If by your letter you intended to demonstrate compassion and affection toward me, then may you receive the best rewards in this life and in the hereafter. Peace.

The two messengers left and informed ‘Amr b. Sa‘id that after giving Husayn assurances for safety and security, he respectfully declined the offer and said, “I have seen a dream in which the Messenger of God, peace and blessings be upon him, has commanded me in the present matter.” They asked, “What is the dream about?” Husayn replied, “I am not at liberty in this and cannot disclose it until my Lord informs me.”

Chapter 4
Stations Crossed on the Route

Tan'im[26]

Husayn resumed his journey until he passed a place called Tan'im, where he ran into a caravan of camels from Yemen. Bahir b. Raysan Himyari, who was Yazid's tax collector in Yemen, had sent it to Yazid—for whom the caravan was carrying turmeric and cloth. Husayn seized the goods and told the camel owners, "I will not force any one of you to join us, but we will be pleased to have whoever wishes to come with us to Iraq, and we shall pay for the hire. As for those who want to leave us at any place, we will pay the price of the hire owed based on the distance traveled." Those who split at this point were given what was due to them.

Sifah

'Abdallah b. Sulaym and Madhri report that they journeyed until they reached Sifah, where they met Farazdaq b. Ghalib, the poet. He stood across from Husayn saying, "May God fulfill your request and desires." Husayn requested, "Give us news of the people you left behind." He replied, "You have

[26] About 12 kms from Mecca and, today, 6 kms from downtown Mecca—Translator.

asked someone who knows the situation. The hearts of the people are with you, but their swords are with Banu Umayyah. The decree will come from heaven and God will do whatever He desires."

Husayn remarked, "You have said the truth. The decree belongs to God and He will do what He desires. Every day our Lord has dominion over all affairs. If decree that He sends down is what we desire, then we praise God for His blessings. He is the one whose help is sought, the one who is worthy of thanksgiving. But should the decree turn out differently from what we desire: those whose intention is the truth and whose hearts are righteous do not rebel against God." Then Husayn parted, bidding him farewell with the customary greeting of peace.

When 'Ubaydallah b. Ziyad received news that Husayn had set out from Mecca towards Kufah, he dispatched Hasin b. Tamim, the chief police officer, to guard a checkpoint called Qadisiyyah and to place security agents on the path between Qadisiyyah and Khaffan and the area between Qadisiyyah to Qutqutanah and to La'la'.

Hajir

Husayn continued his journey until he reached Hajir from Batn al-Rumah. From here he sent out a letter to the people of Kufah through Qays b. Mushir Saydawi. It read as follows:

> From Husayn b. 'Ali to his brother among the believers and Muslims
>
> Peace be with you. Indeed, before you I praise God beside whom there is no other deity. I have received Muslim b. 'Aqil's letter informing me of your positive and supportive attitude, and the consensus of your leaders to assist us and to restore our rights. I have petitioned God to make your actions beneficial and to reward you with the best reward. I left Mecca towards you on Tuesday,[27] 8 Dhulhijjah, the Day of Tarwiyyah. When my messenger arrives, put your affairs in order with a sense of urgency, for I will reach you in a few days, God willing. Peace, mercy and blessings of God be with you.

Qays b. Mushir set out towards Kufah with the letter from Husayn until he reached Qadisiyyah, where Hasin b. Tamim seized him and sent him to 'Ubaydallah b. Ziyad. The latter said, "Climb up to the top of the palace and curse the liar, the son of the liar." Qays went up and said, "O people, this Husayn b. 'Ali is the best of God's creatures. He is the son of Fatimah, the daughter of the Prophet. I am his messenger to you. I left him at Hajir. Respond to his call." Then, he cursed 'Ubaydallah b. Ziyad and sought forgiveness

[27] Actually, this date falls on a Sunday—Translator.

for ‘Ali b. Abi Talib. ‘Ubaydallah gave instruction for him to be hurled down from the top of the palace. They threw him down and he was killed, his body shattered.

Watering Place

Husayn’s onward journey towards Kufah led him to a watering place of the Arabs where ‘Abdallah b. Muti‘ ‘Adawi was staying. Husayn dismounted here. When Muti‘ saw Husayn, he got up and asked, “May my father and mother be sacrificed for you, O son of the Messenger of God. What is your purpose for coming here?” Husayn replied, “The people of Iraq have written to me an invitation to come to them.”

‘Abdallah b. Muti‘ said, “O son of the Messenger of God, I remind you of God and the sanctity of Islam, lest it be maligned. I implore you, in the name of God, to pay heed to the sanctity of the Mesenger of God, peace and blessings upon him. I implore you to pay attention to the veneration of the Arabs. By God, if you strive for that which Banu Umayyah possess, they will surely kill you. Once they kill you, they will never fear killing anyone else. By God, it will be the sanctity of Islam that will be maligned, together with the honor of the Quraysh and the Arabs. Thus, do not do it and do not move towards Kufah and open yourself for attack by Banu Umayyah.” However, Husayn persisted in

his mission to Kufah. He proceeded onward until he arrived at a watering place above Zarud called Khuzaymiyyah.[28]

Meeting of Zuhayr b. Qayn with Imam Husayn

A man from Zurarah reported the following:

> We were joined by Zuhayr b. Qayn Bajali as we traveled from Mecca alongside Husayn. There was nothing more repulsive and distasteful to us than being beside Husayn at every halting place. When Husayn traveled, Zuhayr would stay behind and vice versa. However, on one occasion we were forced to dismount at a place at the same time as Husayn. Husayn dismounted on one side of the road and we halted on the other side. While we were sitting and eating our food, a messenger of Husayn arrived. After greeting us, he entered, saying, "Zuhayr b. Qayn, I have been sent to you from Husayn b. 'Ali with a request that you come to meet him." All of us froze—startled as if birds were sitting on our heads. The wife of Zuhayr b. Qayn said to him, "Will you at least go to him to listen to what he has to say? Then, you are free to leave him."

[28] The distance between Khuzaymiyyah and Tha'labiyyah is 51 kms—Translator.

Zuhayr b. Qayn approached Husayn, and soon after that he returned with a joyful and glowing face. He said to his companions, "Whoever wishes to follow me may do so. Otherwise, it is the end of our affiliation. I will relate to you a story: We were engaged in a battle in Balanjar and God granted us victory along with a substantial amount of war booty. Salman Farsi asked us, 'Are you happy with the victory that God has granted to you and the amount of booty?' We replied, 'Yes.' Then he said to us, 'When you meet the young members of Muhammad's family, show more zeal for fighting alongside him than you would for the booty you have acquired.' Thus, I am bound to bid you farewell." With this, he said to his wife, "You are divorced. Return to your family, for I do not desire anything else but goodness and prosperity for you."

Zarud[29]

'Abdallah b. Sulaym and Madhrib Mushma'ill—both belonging to the tribe of Asad—reported:

[29] Between Khuzaymiyyah and Tha'labiyyah on the way to Kufah—Translator.

After completing the rites of pilgrimage, the uppermost thing on our mind was to join with Husayn on the road in order to witness the events unfolding. We proceeded speedily on our camels until we caught up with Husayn at Zarud. As we approached, we observed that a man from Kufah had changed course when he saw Husayn. Husayn had halted with the intention to speak with him, but this person ignored him and moved on. We pursued this man to ask him if he had any news about Kufah. When we approached him, we greeted him and he returned our greeting. We asked him about his tribal affiliation and he replied that he was an Asadi. We informed him that we were also Asadis. He identified himself as Bukayr b. Math'abah and we apprised him of our lineage. We then asked him to inform us about the state of the people he left behind in Kufah. He replied, "I left Kufah shortly after the killing of Muslim b. 'Aqil and Hani b. 'Urwah. I saw them being dragged by their legs in the marketplace." Thereafter, we went in the direction of Husayn and caught up with him. We traveled beside him until he halted at Tha'labiyyah.

Tha‘labiyyah

We arrived at Tha‘labiyyah in the evening and greeted Husayn. He answered our greeting and we told him, “May God have mercy on you. We have news which we may convey to you either in public or in private.” Husayn looked towards his followers and said, “Nothing is kept from them.”

We asked him, “Did you see the rider who approached you yesterday evening?” He replied, “Yes, and I wanted to ask him for information.” We said to him, “We have relieved you of the trouble and have gathered the information. He was a man from the same tribe as we—Asad—of sound opinion, truthful, virtuous and with good understanding. He informed us that he left Kufah shortly after the killing of Muslim b. ‘Aqil and Hani b. ‘Urwah. He saw them dragged by their legs in the marketplace.” Husayn said, “We are from God and to Him is our return. May God have mercy on both of them.” He repeated this phrase several times.

We said to him, “We implore you in the name of God, for your sake and for the sake of your family, not to move from this place or set out for Kufah. You have none to assist you in Kufah—you have no Shi‘ah. Rather, we fear that they will battle against you.” Upon that, the sons of ‘Aqil exclaimed, “By God, we will not retreat until we have exacted vengeance or tasted death like our brother.”

Husayn looked towards us and said, “There is no point in living after the death of these two men.” We

understood from this that he was determined to continue his journey towards Kufah. We said, “May God grant you the best,” and he replied, “May God have mercy on you both.” Then he waited until dawn, instructed his entourage and servants to collect a good supply of water for the journey and to quench their thirst. They continued to travel until they reached Zubalah.

Zubalah

It was at Zubalah that Husayn received the news of the death of his brother-in-nurture ‘Abdallah b. Yuqtur.[30] He brought out a written statement and read it aloud to the people: “In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful. Very troubling news has reached us regarding the murder of Muslim b. ‘Aqil, Hani b. ‘Urwah and ‘Abdallah b. Yuqtur. Our Shi‘ah have abandoned us. Thus, those of you who wish to part company with us are free to go without any sense of obligation.” People began to scatter away from him in all directions—only they remained with him who, being his followers, had joined him from Medina.

Husayn made the announcement and gave them a choice to leave him, realizing that many of the Bedouin Arabs had joined him on the assumption that he was traveling to a place where people had already pledged allegiance to him.

[30] His mother was the nursemaid of Imam Husayn—Translator.

He was not prepared to allow them to follow him without full disclosure and full knowledge of the state of affairs. Husayn knew that once he had informed them of the true situation, only those followers would accompany him who desired to share in his destiny and to die with him. At dawn, he instructed his entourage to drink water and to carry more for the road. Then he proceeded until he reached Batn al-'Aqabah.

Batn al-'Aqabah

Husayn halted at this place. A member from Banu 'Ikrimah asked him, "I beseech you, in the name of God, not to go towards Kufah—for, by God, nothing awaits you there but the points of spears and the sharp edges of swords. If the people who have invited you were sufficient to support you in battle and to open your path, then it would be a sound decision to go to them. However, as I said, in the present situation I do not think you ought to continue this journey." Husayn replied, "Servant of God, sound decisions are not concealed from me—but the decree of God prevails."[31] Then he left from that place.

[31]In *Kitab al-Irshad* (tr. I.K.A. Howard, p. 334), this report continues as follows: "By God, [my enemies] will not leave me until they have torn the very heart from the depths of my guts. If they do that, God will cause them to be dominated and humiliated until they are the most humiliated of all factions among nations."

Sharaf

Husayn moved onward until he arrived at Sharaf. At dawn, he instructed his entourage to quench their thirst and load up more supplies of water. Then they proceeded at a good pace until about noon. One of the man cried out, "God is greatest." Husayn repeated the phrase but asked him the reason for this utterance. The man replied that they thought they saw palm trees, although the two Asadi men confirmed that they had never before seen a palm tree in this location. Husayn asked them to guess what it was and they replied that they thought they were heads in an army unit.

Husayn agreed with their assessment. He asked them if they knew of a strategic place which they could use to protect themselves from an attack from the rear. This would then allow them to confront the opponent from one direction only. The two Asadi men replied, "Yes, there is this place, Dhu Husam, to your left. It is suitable, if you can get there before them." Thus, he steered to the left and managed to arrive at Dhu Husam before the oncoming cavalry. When they saw that Husayn had veered off the road, they changed direction and came towards him. Husayn dismounted and instructed that tents be set up.

No sooner had the tents been set up that the heads of the army unit and their standards were clearly visible, which resembled bird's wings. The army unit approached,

numbering 1,000 horsemen under the command of Hurr b. Yazid Tamim Yarbu‘i. In the heat of noon, they came to a halt facing Husayn. Husayn and his followers wore turbans and wielded swords. Husayn said to his entourage, “Supply them with water and quench their thirst. Also provide water to their horses little by little.” The attendants first provided water to the people and quenched their thirst. Then they filled their bowls, basins and cups and took them to the horses. When a horse had taken three, four or five draughts, the water was pulled away and given to the next horse until all of them were given water.

When the time for midday prayer (*zuhr*) arrived, Husayn instructed Hajjaj b. Masruq Ju‘fi to give out the call to prayer (*adhan*). Before the *iqamah* was recited, Husayn came out dressed in a waistcloth, cloak and a pair of sandals to address the people. He began by praising and glorifying God. Then, he said, “People, I have a sound justification before God, Mighty and Exalted, and you that I did not come to you before either your numerous letters had found me or your messengers had invited me: ‘Come to us—we have no imam over us. Perhaps, God will unite us with guidance from you.’ I came to you based on that positive attitude of support. Thus, if you honor what you had promised through covenants and oaths, then I will set out for your town. If you will not honor your promises and are displeased with my arrival, then I am prepared to leave you and return to whence I started my journey.”

They were all silent and numb. Then, they ordered the muezzin to recite the *iqamah* and it was read. Husayn

asked Hurr, “Do you want to lead your followers in prayer?” He replied, “No, rather you lead and we will pray behind you.” After the prayers, Husayn returned to his tent and his followers surrounded him. Hurr also retreated to his original place and entered the tent that had been prepared for him. A group of his followers surrounded him and the rest of them went back to their earlier position, holding the reins of their horse and resting in the shade.

When the time for afternoon prayers (‘*asr*) came, Husayn instructed his followers to prepare for departure. He then came out and ordered that the call for prayers be made, and thereafter the *iqamah* was recited. Husayn led the prayers.

After completing the prayer with salutations of peace, he looked towards Hurr’s followers to address them. After praising and glorifying God, he said, “O people, if you are God-conscious and are aware of the rights of those who are deserving of it, then God will be pleased with you. We are the family of the Prophet, who are more entitled to assume guardianship over you than these false claimants who have no such right. They have brought oppression and enmity upon you. If you are averse to us and are ignorant of our rights, and if your opinion is different than what you expressed in your letters and what your messengers conveyed, then I will part company with you.”

Hurr said, “By God, we know nothing of the letters that you mention.” Husayn said, “O ‘Uqbah b. Sim‘an, bring out the two saddlebags which contain their letters of invitation

to me." He brought the two saddlebags filled with letters. He spread them in front of Hurr's army. Hurr exclaimed, "We are not among those who wrote to you letters of invitation. We have been instructed that once we find you, we are not to leave you before bringing you to 'Ubaydallah b. Ziyad."

Husayn answered, "Death will befall you before you do that." Then Husayn instructed his followers to rise and mount their horses. They mounted and waited for the women to be mounted as well before heading off. When they tried to make their way through, the followers of Hurr intercepted them. Husayn cried out to Hurr, "May your mother be deprived of you. What are your intentions?" Hurr replied, "By God, if any other Arab were to say this to me in a situation like yours, I would not hesitate to wish that his mother be deprived of him as well—no matter who this person was. But, by God, your mother cannot be mentioned except in the best of manner."

Husayn asked him what he intended to do. Hurr replied, "By God, I intend to take you to 'Ubaydallah b. Ziyad." Husayn said, "In that case, by God, I will not join you." Hurr insisted, "By God, I will not allow you to go anywhere else." When Hurr saw that the conversation was becoming heated, he said, "I have not been commanded to fight you, but instructed not to leave you before bringing you to Kufah. If you refuse to do so then take a road that goes neither to Kufah or to Medina. This will be a temporary compromise—in the meantime, I can write to Ibn Ziyad and await his fresh orders. You can also write to Yazid b.

Mu'awiya if you wish or to 'Ubaydallah b. Ziyad. Perhaps God will bring about a healthy resolution to this issue without entangling me in it. Therefore, take this road and veer to the left to 'Udhayb and Qadisiyyah." There was a distance of thirty-eight miles between Qadisiyyah and 'Udhayb. Husayn set off on the journey with his followers and Hurr accompanying him.

Bidah

When they arrived at Bidah, Husayn addressed his followers and the companions of Hurr. He began by praising and glorifying God and then said, "O people, the Messenger of God has said: 'Whoever sees an unjust ruler making lawful what God had prohibited, violating God's covenant and challenging the tradition of the Messenger of God, acting sinfully and with enmity with the servants of God, but fails to voice his disagreement and opposition by deed or by word—then God will inflict him with misfortune and hardship.'

Surely, these leaders have clung on to the obedience of Satan and have abandoned obedience to the Merciful. They have made corruption rampant, suspended the legal, religious application of punishment, misappropriated the *fay'*[32]; they have made lawful what God has made unlawful

[32] See footnote no. 9.

and prohibited what God has made lawful. I am more entitled than anyone else to bring about a positive reform.

Your letters were brought to me and your messengers came to me with pledges of allegiance on your behalf—that you would not desert or abandon me. If you honor your pledges, then you will attain proper guidance, for I am Husayn b. ‘Ali, the son of Fatimah, daughter of the Messenger of God, peace and blessings upon him. I am prepared to be with you through thick and thin, and my family is with your families. You will find in me an excellent ideal. However, if you are not prepared to act positively, and are determined to violate your covenant and withdraw your obligation to honor your pledges of allegiance, then, by my life, it is not something unusual or bizarre. You betrayed my father, my brother and my cousin, Muslim. You can deceive a blind person. Thus, you have erred in your good fortune and have lost your destiny. 'Whoever breaks his oath only injures his own soul.'[33] God will free me from any need of your support. Peace, mercy and blessings on you.”

Hurr was traveling alongside Husayn and reminded him, “Husayn, I caution you to act with discretion regarding your life—for I assure you that if you fight us you will be fought. In this situation, you would certainly be killed.” Husayn replied, “Do you think that you can frighten me with death. Could a worse misfortune fall upon you than killing me? I do not know what to say to you except to quote the words of the brother of Aws. He made this statement to his

[33] Qur'an, 48:10.

cousin when he met him on his way to help the Messenger of God. His cousin remarked, “Where are you heading, for surely you will be killed.” He replied:

> I will carry on, for there is no shame in embracing death for a young man
> so long as he aims for the truth and struggles as a Muslim.
>
> And has helped righteous men by sacrificing his own life
> and disassociates from those who cause destruction and delude people.

Upon hearing this stern reply, Hurr retreated from Husayn. He and his followers remained on one side and Husayn on the other.

‘Udhayb Hijanat[34]

Hurr and Husayn traveled beside each other and arrived at ‘Udhayb al-Hijanat. Here a group of four people arrived from Kufah on their camels along with the horse of Nafi‘ b. Hilal. Their guide, Tirimmah b. ‘Adi, accompanied them on horse and began to recite the following verses upon approaching Husayn:

> Camels, do not be alarmed by my insistence

[34] It lies at a distance of 9.5 kms from Qadisiyyah—Translator.

but move forward before the rise of dawn,

With the most virtuous riders and group
until you reach the place of a noble descent,

A praiseworthy, free and generous man
whom God has sent to carry out the best mission.

May God keep him alive forever.

Husayn said, "By God, I hope that we will attain success in whatever God decrees for us—death or military victory."

Hurr came towards Husayn and said, "These individuals who have come from Kufah were not among the group that came with you. I will either apprehend them or force them to go back." Husayn asserted, "I will protect them as I would myself. They are only my helpers and supporters. You had given me your word that you would not take any action against me until you receive instructions from Ibn Ziyad." Hurr reconfirmed his promise but insisted these four individuals had not come with him from Mecca. In response, Husayn said, "They are as much my companions as those who came with me. Thus our agreement covers them as well. Otherwise, I will have to engage you in battle." Upon hearing that, Hurr withdrew.

Husayn asked them, "Give me news about the people you left behind." Mujammi' b. 'Abdallah 'A'idhi,

who was one of the four individuals who came, said, "The eminent leaders have been heavily bribed and their sacks have been filled to ensure their support and loyalty. They are united in their campaign against you. As for the remaining people, their hearts are tilted in your favor but their swords will be displayed against you."

Husayn then asked them to give him news about the messenger he had sent out to them. They asked for his name and Husayn told them that he was Qays b. Mushir Saydawi. They said, "Yes, Hasin b. Tamim had intercepted him and sent him to Ibn Ziyad, who ordered him to curse you and your father. Instead, he invoked blessings upon you and your father and cursed Ibn Ziyad and his father. He invited the people to support you and informed them of your imminent arrival. Upon this, Ibn Ziyad ordered that he be hurled down from the highest point of the palace." Husayn's eyes overflowed with tears, which he could not hold back. He said, "'Some of them have reached their death and some are waiting [to die] and have not changed [their determination] in the least.'[35] O God, make paradise our abode and for those who have been martyred. Gather us and them in a place that embraces Your mercy and bestow upon us what precious rewards you have reserved."

Tirimmah b. 'Adi came close to Husayn and said, "By God, I have been looking around and I do not find anyone with you. If those men on Hurr's side engage you in a battle, they would overpower you. At the outskirts of

[35] Qur'an 33:23.

Kufah, before leaving Kufah yesterday to come to you, I saw more people than I have ever seen in one place. I asked about them and was told that they were gathered for inspection and then would be sent out against Husayn. I implore you before God, if you can avoid moving even a step closer to them, do so. If you wish to seek temporary refuge some place where you can assess your situation, come with me so I could place you in our impenetrable mountains called Aja'. I will accompany you until you are settled in Qurayyah."

Husayn replied, "May God give you and your community the best of rewards. We have an understanding with the people. It does not allow us to separate from them. Further, we do not know what will transpire as the final outcome." Tirimmah bade him goodbye and said, "May God repel from you the evil of both *jinn* and mankind. I have brought from Kufah supplies and money for my family. I will deliver them and return to join you, God willing. If I join you in time, by God, I will surely be one of your ardent supporters."

Husayn said, "If you can do this, hurry! May God have mercy on you." Tirimmah reported that when he met his family, he left with them whatever was useful, uttered his last instructions and informed them of his intentions. Then, he set out until he came near 'Udhayb al-Hijanat, where he met Sama'ah b. Badn, who informed him of Husayn's death. And then he returned.

Qasr Bani Maqatil

Husayn continued until he arrived at Qasr Bani Maqatil. He halted there and observed a large pitched tent. He asked, "To whom does this tent belong?" He was told that it belonged to 'Ubaydallah b. Hurr Ju'fi. Through a messenger, Husayn invited him to come to him. However, 'Ubaydallah was reluctant and said, "We are from God and to Him is our return. By God, I left Kufah with the sole purpose of avoiding the displeasure of being there when Husayn would arrive. By God, I do not want to see him and I do not want him to see me."

The messenger returned and informed Husayn of what had transpired. Husayn put on his sandals and went to see him. He greeted him with the salutation of peace and sat down. Then he invited him to join him, but 'Ubaydallah b. Hurr repeated his previous position. Husayn told him, "Be on guard that your lack of support for us does not translate to battling against us. By God, every person who hears our call for help and fails to respond will face nothing but destruction." Then Husayn stood up and left.

'Uqbah b. Sim'an relates that at the end of the night, Husayn asked them to load up a supply of water and instructed them to prepare to move on. After traveling for some time and having left Qasr Bani Muqatil, Husayn rested his head. When he awoke, he said, "'We are from God and

to Him is our return'[36]; all praise belongs to God, Lord of the universe." He repeated this twice or three times.

His son, 'Ali b. Husayn, who was on his horse, came close to him and said, "We are from God and to Him is our return.[37] O my father, may I be sacrificed for you. Why do you praise God now and recite the Qur'anic verse about returning to Him?" He replied, "In my slumber, I saw a horseman in a vision who said to me: 'People are journeying and their fates are marching towards them.' With this, I realized that it was informing us of our death."

'Ali b. Husayn asked, "O my father—may God spare you from all evil—are we not on the truth?" He replied, "Indeed we are, by the One to whom all servants return." 'Ali said, "In that case, O father, there is no need for us to be concerned as long as we die in the path of truth." Husayn said, "May God give you the best reward that a son is entitled to from his father."

When morning came, Husayn halted and offered the morning prayer. Then, he rushed to mount his horse and began to steer towards the left with his followers in order to split away from Hurr and his companions. Hurr intercepted them and prevented them from changing direction. Hurr attempted to divert them toward Kufah but this was strongly opposed by Husayn. As a result, Hurr stopped insisting, but

[36] Qur'an 2:156.
[37] Ibid.

continued to march alongside Husayn until they reached Ninawa.

Ninawa

Husayn halted at Ninawa and dismounted his horse. Just then, a rider on a fast horse appeared from the direction of Kufah carrying arms and a bow hanging on his shoulder. Everyone came to a stop and looked towards him. As he approached them, he greeted Hurr and his followers, but did not salute Husayn and his companions. He gave Hurr a letter from ‘Ubaydallah b. Ziyad, which read as follows: “Upon receipt of my letter, immediately halt the journey of Husayn. Make him stop in an open area without any protective enclosure or water supply. I have instructed my messenger to remain with you and not to leave you before he bears the news that you have implemented my orders. Peace be with you.”

After reading the letter, Hurr told Husayn and his followers, “This is a letter from the governor ‘Ubaydallah b. Ziyad ordering me to stop you at an open place. This is his messenger, who has been commanded not to leave me until I have carried out his orders.” Abu Sha‘tha glanced at the messenger of Ibn Ziyad and asked him, “Are you Nusayr Baddi from the Kinda tribe?” He replied, “Yes.”

To this reply, Abu Sha‘tha said to him, “May your mother be deprived of you. What kind of message have you

brought?" He replied, "What is it that I have brought? I have submitted to my imam and have fulfilled my pledge of allegiance to him." Ibn Muhasir replied, "In the process you have disobeyed God and have obeyed your imam that will bring about your own destruction. You have embraced degradation and hell-fire. God, Mighty and Majestic, says, 'We have made them imams, who invite people to hell-fire, and on the Day of Resurrection they will not be helped.'[38] This is an apt description of your imam."

Hurr began to implement the order by forcing people to halt at a place with no access to water and away from the village. Husayn's camp would say, "Allow us to stop in this village (referring to Ninawa) or at another village called Ghadiriyyah or Shafayyah."[39] To these choices, Hurr

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[38] Qur'an 28:41.

[39] It is apparent from the enumeration of these place names that Kerbala was not the name of a village but rather of a region, as mentioned in the book *Dala'il wa al-Masa'il* by Sayyid Hibah al-Din al-Shahrastani. In a report, Sibt b. Jawzi says that Husayn asked, "What is the name of this place?" They replied, "Kerbala, and the village contained in this region is called Ninawa." Upon hearing this, Husayn cried and said, "Grief [*karb*] and tribulation [*bala'*]. Umm Salamah had informed me of this place. She had said, 'Jibra'il was with the Messenger of God and you were with me. You began to cry. The Messenger of God said: "Give me my son." So, I handed you over to him and he placed you in his room. Jibra'il asked him, "Do you love him?" He replied, "Yes." Jibra'il said, "Your community will kill him. If you wish, I can show you the place where he will be killed." The Prophet desired that and was shown the site.' Husayn took a piece of earth and smelled it. He said, "By God, this is the same place that Jibra'il informed the Messenger of God where I will be killed." A similar report is narrated by Ibn Sa'd in *al-Tabaqat* on the authority of Waqidi and Sha'bi—Translator.

replied, "No, by God, I cannot do this, because the man has been sent as a spy to monitor me."

At this juncture, Zuhayr b. Qayn said to Husayn, "O son of the Messenger of God, fighting these people now is easier than battling the reinforcements that will join them. By my life, a military force will come against us that we will be unable to confront." Husayn replied, "I will not be the one to initiate fighting against them."

Zuhayr said to Husayn, "Come with us to that village and halt there, because it is well enclosed for protection and lies on the bank of Euphrates. If they prevent us from going there, we can battle them, for it is easier than fighting those who will soon join them." Husayn asked for the name of this village and was told that it was called 'Aqr.[40] He said, "O God, I seek refuge in You from 'Aqr," and stopped there. It was on Thursday,[41] 2 Muharram 61 A.H.

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[40] It lies in the locality of Kerbala—Translator.

[41] Actually, this date corresponds to Tuesday, not Thursday—Translator.

Chapter 5
Arrival of the Army of Ibn Sa‘d

The next day [3 Muharram], ‘Umar b. Sa‘d b. Abi Waqqas arrived from Kufah with four thousand soldiers. This cavalry of soldiers had originally been dispatched by ‘Ubaydallah b. Ziyad to subdue the people of Daylam in Dastaba. By then, Ibn Ziyad had appointed ‘Umar b. Sa‘d as governor of Rayy. With the predicament of Husayn, who was moving towards Kufah, Ibn Ziyad changed Ibn Sa‘d's assignment. His instructions to Ibn Sa‘d were, "Go towards Husayn. When you complete this task, return back to your governorate." ‘Umar b. Sa‘d petitioned, "If you can relieve me of this mission, then do so. May God have mercy on you." ‘Ubaydallah replied, "Yes, if you hand over to us our governorate of Rayy." Ibn Sa‘d requested a day to reflect on this matter.

Ibn Sa‘d left to seek the counsel and advice of his sincere friends. Everyone advised him not to undertake this mission. Hamzah b. Mughirah, who was his sister's son, said to him, "O uncle, I implore you, in the name of God, to desist from moving against Husayn, for it will constitute a great sin in the sight of your Lord and violates the bond of kinship. By God, it would be better to give up all your worldly wealth and your governorate than to meet God, burdened with the responsibility of having spilled Husayn's blood." ‘Umar b. Sa‘d responded, "Indeed, I will follow your advice, God willing."

Hisham reports that he went to see 'Umar b. Sa'd after the latter had been instructed to march against Husayn. Ibn Sa'd said to him, "The governor has ordered me to go out against Husayn and I refused to do so." Hisham said to him, "May God guide you to do what is proper and right. Do not undertake this mission of combat against Husayn." Then, he left him. Someone came to Hisham and informed him, "This 'Umar b. Sa'd is inciting people against Husayn." He went to 'Umar b. Sa'd and found him seated. When the latter saw Hisham, he turned his face away from him. By this gesture, Hisham realized that he had decided to march against Husayn and left him.

'Umar b. Sa'd went to Ibn Ziyad and said, "May God make you prosperous. You have entrusted me with the governorship of Rayy and the mission against Husayn. People have heard about my appointment. If you consider me suitable for this post, then do so. Otherwise, dispatch an army of the eminent leaders of Kufah with this army. I am not the best candidate to fight on your behalf." Thereupon, he proposed some names.

Ibn Ziyad replied, "Do not try to teach me about the eminent leaders of Kufah. I am not seeking your advice on who to send out. Either you set out against Husayn with your soldiers or hand over your governorate." Noting the insistence of 'Ubaydallah b. Ziyad, he agreed to undertake

the mission with four thousand soldiers.[42] They arrived at Ninawa the next day, 3 Muharram.

‘Umar b. Sa‘d instructed ‘Azrah b. Qays to go to Husayn and ask him about his purpose for coming here and his intentions. ‘Azrah was one of those who had sent written invitations to Husayn and was thus embarassed to go to him. Other eminent leaders who had written to Husayn faced the same awkward situation, expressed displeasure and refused to meet Husayn.

In the meantime, Kathir b. ‘Abdallah Sha‘bi, a courageous horseman who never shied away from anything said, “I will go to him. By God, if you wish, I will kill him.” ‘Umar retorted, “I do not want you to kill him. Rather, go and ask him why he came here.” On his way towards Husayn, Kathir was spotted by Abu Thumamah Sa’idi, who told Husayn, “May God make you prosperous, O Abu ‘Abdallah. The most wicked person on earth who has spilled blood and killed people is coming toward you.”

Abu Thumamah approached him and said, “Lay down your sword.” The man replied, “By God, no. There is no cause for that. I am only a messenger. If you listen to me, I will tell you what I have been asked to convey. If you refuse, I will go back.” Abu Thumamah said, “I will grasp

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[42] In *Kitab al-Irshad*, Shaykh Mufid agrees that ‘Umar b. Sa‘d’s army numbered 4,000. Other *maqtal* works give a higher figure. For example, Shafi‘i in *Matalib al-Sa’ul* says that there were 12,000 soldiers and Shaykh Saduq reports in his *Al-Amali* on the authority of Imam Sadiq that there were 30,000 soldiers on the side of ‘Umar b. Sa‘d—Translator.

the hilt of your sword and then you can convey the message." He replied, "No, by God, you will not hold on to it." Abu Thumamah said, "In that case, give me the message for Husayn and I will convey it to him on your behalf. I will not allow you to go near him, for you are a treacherous man." They exchanged curses. Kathir returned to 'Umar b. Sa'd and informed him of what had transpired.

'Umar b. Sa'd called out for Qurrah b. Qays Hanzali and said to him, "Shame on you, Qurrah. Go to Husayn and ask him what has brought him here and what he wants." Qurrah began to walk towards the camp of Husayn. When Husayn saw him approaching, he asked, "Does anyone know him?" Habib b. Muzahir replied, "Yes. He is from the Hanzalah clan of Tamim and the son of our sister. I used to know him as a man of sound understanding and would not have imagined his presence on the other side."

Qurrah entered and greeted Husayn. Then he conveyed 'Umar b. Sa'd's message to him. Husayn replied, "The people of your town wrote to me invitations to come. If they are now averse to my presence, I'll leave them and go away." Qurrah returned to Ibn Sa'd to inform him of this conversation. Ibn Sa'd said, "I hope that God will exempt me from engaging him in battle or declare war on him."

Letter of 'Umar b. Sa'd to Ibn Ziyad

'Umar b. Sa'd wrote a letter to Ibn Ziyad:

In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful

When I reached Husayn, I sent my messenger to him and asked him what his purpose for coming here was and what he wanted. He responded, “The people of this town wrote to me letters of invitation and their messengers came to me appealing to me to come. Therefore, I have come to them. Since they are displeased with my presence here and hold to views that differ from what their messengers brought to me, I am prepared to go back.”

When the letter was read to Ibn Ziyad, he said, “Now that our claws have seized him, he seeks for a way out, but now is not the time for escape.”

Response of Ibn Ziyad to ‘Umar b. Sa‘d’s Letter

Ibn Ziyad wrote to ‘Umar b. Sa‘d as follows:

In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful

I have received your letter and have understood the contents. Offer Husayn and

> his followers the opportunity to pledge allegiance to Yazid b. Mu‘awiyah. If they do so, we will determine our decree. Peace.

Upon reading the letter, Ibn Sa‘d said, “I had a feeling that Ibn Ziyad will not accept a conciliatory posture.”

Imam Husayn and his Followers Denied Water

Another letter came from ‘Ubaydallah b. Ziyad addressed to ‘Umar b. Sa‘d, “Prevent Husayn and his followers from reaching the water supply. They should not be allowed ever to taste a drop of it—as was done with the righteous, pious and oppressed caliph, ‘Uthman b. ‘Affan.” Consequently, ‘Umar b. Sa‘d dispatched ‘Amr b. Hajjaj with five hundred horsemen to be stationed along the river in order to prevent Husayn and his followers from obtaining a drop of water. This was done three days before the battle against Husayn.

Meeting of Ibn Sa‘d with Husayn

Husayn sent ‘Amr b. Qarazah b. Ka‘b Ansari to ‘Umar b. Sa‘d to arrange for a meeting with him at night between the two camps. ‘Umar b. Sa‘d came out with about twenty horsemen and Husayn with a similar number. When they faced each other, Husayn instructed his followers to

withdraw and so did ‘Umar. They conversed for the greater part of the night and then each one returned to his respective camp with his followers.

People speculated on what they had discussed. They said that Husayn made the following proposal to ‘Umar b. Sa‘d, “Let us go to Yazid b. Mu‘awiyah and leave the two armies.” ‘Umar replied, “Then my house will be devastated.” Husayn said, “I will reconstruct it for you.” ‘Umar said, “Then my properties will be confiscated.” Husayn said, “I will provide you with better properties in the Hijaz.” ‘Umar repeated this to him. People speculated about the conversation and conjecture was rife among them, although no one had actually heard the conversation or knew of its contents.[43]

Second Letter of ‘Umar b. Sa‘d to Ibn Ziyad

> ‘Umar b. Sa‘d wrote to ‘Ubaydallah b. Ziyad as follows:
>
> God has wiped out mutual enmity. He has united us and reformed the affairs of our community. This Husayn has undertaken to return to where he came from; or we can send him to one of the border areas where

[43] ‘Uqbah b. Sim‘an vehemently disputes this report and says that Imam Husayn never offered to go and see Yazid b. Mu‘awiyah—Translator.

> he will be treated like any other Muslim with the same rights and obligations; or we send him to Yazid, the Commander of the faithful, to offer his pledge of allegiance to him and resolve their differences. This approach will be satisfactory to you—it will be for the betterment of the community.

When ‘Ubaydallah read the letter, he said, “This is a letter from someone who is sincere with the governor and is concerned about the welfare of his community. Yes, I accept his proposal.” Shimr b. Dhi Jawshan rose up and said, “Will you accept this from someone who has halted nearby on your land. By God, if you allow him to leave your dominion without obtaining his allegiance, he will be considered strong and powerful, and you will be viewed as weak and impotent. Do not give up your position, for it will be a sign of compromise. Rather, let them submit to your judgment and then you can either punish them or forgive them, as you have full discretion. By God, I have been told that Husayn and ‘Umar b. Sa‘d sit between the military camps discussing all night long.” Ibn Ziyad responded, “Yes, your opinion is sound.”

Second Letter of Ibn Ziyad to ‘Umar b. Sa‘d

> Thereafter, ‘Ubaydallah b. Ziyad wrote the following letter to ‘Umar b. Sa‘d:

> I did not send you to Husayn to delay confrontation with him, to give him respite, to offer him overtures of peace and life, to intercede on his behalf with me. Take note that if Husayn and his followers submit to my authority and surrender, then send them to me in peace. However, if they refuse, then engage them to kill and to mutilate—for they are deserving of that. If Husayn is killed, let the horses trample back and forth on his chest, for he is a treacherous rebel who has divided the community. This will not injure him after death, but I have sworn that I will do this if he is killed. If you execute our order then we will give you a reward befitting those who listen and obey. If you refuse, then give up our authority and army and hand over the command to Shimr b. Dhi Jawshan. We have given him our mandate. Peace.

‘Ubaydallah b. Ziyad summoned Shimr and said, “Go with this letter to ‘Umar b. Sa‘d and instruct him to advise Husayn and his followers to submit to my authority. If they do so, send them to me in peace. If they do not, he should engage them in battle. If ‘Umar b. Sa‘d does this, listen to him and obey. In the event that he refuses to fight them, you are appointed as the commander of the people. Seize ‘Umar, sever his head and dispatch it to me here.”

When this missive was handed to Shimr, he rose up with ‘Abdallah b. Abi Muhill, who said, “May God make the

governor prosperous. The sons of our sister are on the side of Husayn.[44] If you deem it proper, write them a letter guaranteeing their security." Ibn Ziyad replied in the affirmative and instructed his secretary to write such a letter. It was sent by 'Abdallah b. Abi Muhill through his *mawla* Kuzman.

Shimr Arrives with the Letter of 'Umar b. Sa'd

Shimr handed over the letter of 'Ubaydallah b. Ziyad to 'Umar b. Sa'd. When the latter read it, he said, "Woe to you. May God deprive you of His Mercy and make unpleasant what you have brought to me. By God, I think that you influenced Ibn Ziyad against accepting my proposal to him and as a result have spoiled our efforts to correct this matter. Husayn will never submit, for he is endowed with a proud spirit and self-esteem." Shimr asked, "Tell me what you plan to do. Will you execute the governor's order and do battle with his enemy? If not, withdraw—and hand over the command of the army to me." 'Umar replied, "No, you will not benefit by exploiting this situation. I will execute the order and you will lead the men."

Guarantee of Security Offered to 'Abbas and His Brothers

[44] Including 'Abbas, Ja'far, 'Uthman and 'Abdallah.

Shimr approached the camp of Husayn and his followers and called out, “Where are the sons of our sister?” ‘Abbas, Ja‘far, ‘Abdallah and ‘Uthman came out and asked him what he wanted. He replied that he had come to offer them a guarantee of safety and security. The youths replied, “May God curse you and your guarantee. What sort of an uncle are you who offers us security while the son of the Messenger of God has no guarantee of safety?”

When Kuzman, *mawla* of ‘Abdallah b. Abi Muhill, arrived he called out to them and said, “This is a letter [guaranteeing your] safety that your uncle has sent to you.” The youths replied, “Convey our greetings to our uncle and tell him that we are in no need of your guarantee of safety, for the guarantee of God is better than the guarantee of an immoral person.”

Chapter 6
‘Umar b. Sa‘d Marches Towards Imam Husayn

After completing afternoon prayer, ‘Umar b. Sa‘d called out, “O horsemen of God, climb onto your horses with anticipation of good news.” He rode along with them until they approached the camp of Husayn and his followers. They saw Husayn seated in front of his tent leaning on his sword while he dozed off on his knees.

His sister Zaynab heard the sound of the oncoming army. She approached her brother and said, “My brother, do you not hear the sound of the army coming towards us?” Husayn raised his head and said, “I just saw the Messenger of God, peace and blessings of God upon him, in a vision. He said to me, ‘You are marching towards us.’” His sister slapped her face and cried out, “Woe to me.” Husayn told her, “Woe is not for you. Be quiet—may God have mercy on you.”

‘Abbas b. ‘Ali exclaimed, “My brother, the people are marching towards us.” Husayn stood up and said, “O ‘Abbas, I would sacrifice myself for you. Mount your horse and go to meet them. Ask them what the purpose of this advance is, and why the situation has so changed that they are moving towards us.” ‘Abbas, together with twenty horsemen, moved forward towards the advancing army. Among his followers were Zuhayr b. Qayn and Habib b. Muzahir.

‘Abbas asked them, “Why has the situation changed and what are your intentions?” They answered, “A directive has come from the governor that we should offer you the choice between submission to his authority and engagement in battle.” ‘Abbas said, “Do not rush into anything before I have had a chance to notify Abu ‘Abdallah of your position.” Thus, the advancing group stopped and said, “Go and notify him. Then, tell us what he says.”

‘Abbas rushed back to Husayn to inform him of the situation, as his companions began to address the people. Habib b. Muzahir said to Zuhayr b. Qayn, “Address the people or I can speak to them. It is your choice.” Zuhayr asked Habib to start with the address. Habib told them, “By God, how evil will the people be viewed tomorrow in the sight of God—those who will be in His presence after killing the progeny of His Prophet and his family, peace and blessings of God upon them, the devotees of this town, the constant worshippers of God at night and who remember God often.”

‘Azrah b. Qays replied, “You claim great purity for yourself.” Zuhayr said to him, “O ‘Azrah, surely it is God who purified and guided them. Thus, be God-conscious, for I am a sincere advisor. ‘Azrah, I implore you in the name of God not to be among those who help the misguided ones into killing pure souls.” He replied, “Zuhayr, in our view you were not from among the Shi‘ah of this family. You were a supporter of the party of ‘Uthman.”

Zuhayr said, “Are you not presumptuous about my affiliation? By God, I was not among those who ever wrote to him letters or sent messengers with promises of help and support. It was only by coincidence that we crossed paths. When I saw him, he caused me to remember the Messenger of God, peace and blessings upon him, and his status in relation to him. I knew well his enemies and your party. Then, I reflected and realized that I should help him and become a member of his party, lay down my life to safeguard his—in order to preserve the abandoned message of the truth of God and His Messenger, peace upon him.”

When ‘Abbas brought the ultimatum from ‘Umar b. Sa‘d, Husayn said, “Go to them and, if possible, cause them to postpone until tomorrow morning, so that we may devote tonight for prayers to our Lord, supplications and seeking of forgiveness. He knows that I have always loved performing prayers to Him, reciting His Book, supplicating Him profusely and seeking His forgiveness.”

‘Abbas conveyed this message to ‘Umar b. Sa‘d, who asked Shimr, “What do you think about this proposal of Husayn?” He replied, “Search for your own decision, as you are the governor and the decision rests with you.” ‘Umar said, “Would that I had not to decide!” Then, he approached the people and asked them for their opinion. ‘Amr b. Hajjaj b. Salamah responded, “Glory be to God. Even if they were from Daylam and had requested a short reprieve, you would be duty-bound to grant their request.” Qays b. Ash‘ath asserted, “Grant them their request. By my life, you should commence fighting in the morning.” ‘Umar

said, "By God, if I knew that they would fight me, I would not delay it till tomorrow morning."

'Ali b. Husayn reports that a messenger sent by 'Umar b. Sa'd came to them. He stood at a place from where his voice could be heard and said, "We will give you a reprieve until tomorrow. Then, if you submit, we will hand you over to our governor 'Ubaydallah b. Ziyad. If you refuse, we will pursue you to the end."

Chapter 7
Events on the Eve of ‘Ashura

Sermon of Imam Husayn

‘Ali b. Husayn reported that Husayn gathered his followers after ‘Umar b. Sa‘d returned to his camp, which was close to evening. “I moved close enough to hear him, even though I was sick. I heard my father address his companions.”

> I glorify God, Blessed and Most High, with the best glorification. I praise Him in both prosperity and adversity. O God, I praise You for honoring us with prophethood, teaching us the Qur’an and endowing us with a profound understanding of religion. You have enabled us to see, hear and reflect, and you have not made us polytheists. I know of no followers more superior and righteous than my followers, or of a family more pious and closely knit than my family. May God bestow you with the best of rewards.
>
> I believe, tomorrow will be our last day that will be brought about by these enemies. I have given thought to your situation. You are all justified to leave—you are absolved of your obligation to me. Use this cover of night to escape. Let each one of you take the hand of a person from my family. Then

> spread about in different towns until God rescues you. The people pursue me only, and once they seize me, they will stop pursuing anyone else.

Response of the Hashimites

‘Abbas was the first one to speak out, “Why would we ever do that? In order to remain alive after you? May God never allow that to happen.” Then, his brothers and sons and the sons of Hasan and sons of ‘Abdallah b. Ja‘far [‘Awn and Muhammad] spoke in a similar vein.

Husayn said, “O sons of ‘Aqil, your family has sacrificed enough with the killing of Muslim. Leave, for I give you permission.” They replied, “What would the people say? They would say that we abandoned our shaykh, our master, our cousin and the best of uncles; that we shot no arrows with him; that we thrust no spears with him; that we wielded no swords with him; that we do not know about their contribution. No, by God, we will never leave you. Rather, we will offer our lives, wealth and family to safeguard you. We will fight alongside you until we attain your goal. Life would be so distasteful after you.”

Response of the Companions

Muslim b. ‘Awsajah stood up and said, “How is it possible to leave you and before God hold that we had fulfilled your rights. By God, not until I have thrust my spear into their chests, and smitten with my sword so long that only its hilt remains in my hand. I will not leave you. If I have no weapon with which to fight them, I shall hurl stones at them to secure your safety until I die with you.”

Sa‘id b. ‘Abdallah Hanafi said, “By God, we will never leave you until God knows that we protected the sanctity of the departed Messenger of God, peace and blessings be upon him, that is preserved in you. By God, if I knew that I will be killed and then be brought back to life and then burnt alive and scattered, I would not abandon you even if this process were repeated seventy times. How then could I not sacrifice myself for your safety when I know that there is only one death with honor, which can never be cast aside.”

Zuhary b. Qayn said, “By God, I would love to be killed, then revived, then killed a thousand times in this manner – if it can keep you safe with the young ones from your family.”

His followers spoke with unity and resoluteness one after another. “By God, we will not leave you. Rather, our life and all of our being will be offered for your protection. If we are killed, we will have faithfully carried out our pledges.”

Imam Husayn on the Eve of 'Ashura

'Ali b. Husayn b. 'Ali relates: I was sitting on the eve before the day my father was killed, while my aunt Zaynab was treating me for my sickness. My father had returned to his tent and with him was Huwayy, the *mawla* of Abu Dharr Ghifari, who was readying his sword. My father was reciting,

> "Time, you are a shameful partner for a friend
> with the passage of dawn and sunset.
>
> How many companions and supporters will be killed
> but time will not be content with my substitute.
>
> The final affair rests with the Majestic One
> for every living being journeys back to Him along the path."

He repeated it two or three times, until I realized what he meant. I was choking with tears and made every effort to resist shedding them. I kept quiet and understood that we were beset with afflictions and trials. When my aunt heard Imam Husayn's poem, she could not restrain herself and displayed her emotion by tearing her clothes—on account of the inherent qualities of women. She went to him unveiled and said, "I am going to be deprived of a brother. I wish that

death had overtaken my life. My mother Fatimah is dead and so is my father, 'Ali and my brother Hasan. O successor of the ones who passed away and the supervisor of those who are still living."

Husayn looked at her and said, "Aunt, do not let Shaytan rob you of your patience." She said, "O Abu 'Abdallah, you are preparing for death. May my life be sacrificed to safeguard yours." Husayn tried to control his grief, tears brimming in his eyes, "If the sand grouse are left alone at night, they will sleep."[45] She expressed her grief, "O my sorrow. Your life will be snatched away from you and that is excruciatingly painful for my heart and soul." She slapped her face and tore her dress. Then she fell down unconscious.

Husayn got up and sprayed some water on her face and said to her, "My sister, be God-conscious and gain strength by turning to God. Know that the inhabitants of the earth will die and those in heaven will not remain forever: Everything will perish except the face of God[46]—who created the earth by His power. He sends out creatures and retrieves them; He is one and unique. My father, mother and brother were superior to me, and we have an excellent example in the Messenger of God." He continued to comfort her in this manner, "O sister, I take an oath, therefore fulfill it—you should not tear your clothes, scratch your face or lament aloud with grief and sorrow when I die." Then, he

[45] That is, let divine decree take its natural course—Translator.
[46] Qur'an 28:88.

brought her to sit with me. He went out to his followers and instructed them to bring their tents close together—should their enemies attack them while they were indoors, they could do so from only one direction.

Husayn had brought cane and firewood to place in the ditch, which they had dug during the night. He said, “When they march against us and fight us, we will set the wood on fire, so we will not be open to attack from the rear. We can fight them from a single direction.”

Imam Husayn and His Followers on the Eve of ‘Ashura

When evening approached, Husayn and his followers spent the entire night in prayers, seeking forgiveness, supplicating and invoking God. Dahhak b. ‘Abdallah reports:

> Some of the enemy’s horsemen passed by to keep an eye on us. Husayn said, “Let not those who disbelieve imagine that it is better for their souls that we should grant them a delay. We grant it only that they might increase in sinfulness. They shall have shameful doom. God does not leave the believers in your present state until He has separated the evil from the good.”[47]

[47] Qur’an 3:178-79.

One of the horseman patrolling the area heard Husayn and said, “By the Lord of the Ka‘bah, we are the righteous ones and distinct from you.” I realized who he was and asked Burayr b. Hudayr whether he recognized that man. He replied in the negative. I told him, “He is Abu Harb Sabi‘i, who is prone to laughter and frivolity. He is known as a steadfast, brutal and courageous fighter who was imprisoned at the time of Sa‘id b. Qays for criminal activities.” Burayr exclaimed, “O grave sinner. Would God make you one of the righteous?” He replied, “Who are you?” Burayr said, “I am Burayr b. Hudayr.” Abu Harb said, “We are from God. It pains me to see you perish. By God, you will perish.” Burayr responded, “Abu Harb, will you not repent to God for your grave sins? By God, we are the righteous ones and you are the wicked. I am a witness to this.” I [i.e., Dahhak] said, “Woe to you. Have you no knowledge to help yourself?” He [Abu Harb] replied sarcastically, “May I sacrifice my life for the one who used to be a drinking companion of Yazid b. ‘Udhrah.” Burayr said, “May God demonstrate His displeasure with your opinion at all times. You are indeed ignorant.” Then Abu Harb left us.

Chapter 8
Morning of ‘Ashura

‘Umar b. Sa‘d offered the morning prayers on ‘Ashura and came out with his followers, who were with him. ‘Amr b. Hajjaj was entrusted with the right wing and Shimr with the left wing. ‘Azrah b. Qays was put in charge of the horsemen and Shabath b. Rib‘i in charge of the foot soldiers. The standard was given to Dhuwayd, his *mawla*.

When the opposing army advanced towards Husayn, he raised his hands and supplicated,

> O God, I put my trust in You in every tribulation.
> You are my hope in every distress.
>
> You are my trust and provider in every affair that falls upon me—regardless of how much the heart may weaken, strategies fail, friends abandon and the enemy joyfully celebrate.
>
> I have received it under Your Kingdom; I complain to You out of my desire for You alone and none else. Give me relief and dispel the calamity for You are the Master of all bounties, the Owner of all benevolence and the Ultimate Destination of all desires.

They approached our tents and observed that we had lit firewood and cane in a ditch to deter attack from the rear. One of the opponent's horsemen galloped toward us with weapons. He passed by our tents without addressing us. All that he could see was the burning firewood and cane. Thus, he began to return back and cried out loudly, "Husayn, are you rushing towards hell-fire in this world before the Day of Resurrection?" Husayn asked, "Who is this person? It sounds like Shimr b. Dhi Jawshan." They replied, "Yes, may God make you prosperous." Husayn said, "Son of a great herdess, you are more entitled to be scorched by the fire." Muslim b. 'Awsajah said, "O son of the Messenger of God, may my life be sacrificed for you. Give me permission to shoot an arrow at him for it will most likely hit him. He is an evil person and a brutal tyrant." Husayn replied to him, "Do not fire at him for I should not like to initiate the fight against them."

Sermon of Imam Husayn

When the people began to approach him, he called for his horse and addressed them at the top of his voice such that almost everyone could hear him:

> People, listen to what I have to say and do not rush me, that I may admonish you your duties toward me and explain to you the reason why I came to you. If you accept my explanation, verify my truthfulness and deal with me with justice. Perhaps then will you

> attain prosperity rather than pursue me. Should you reject my explanation and deny me fair treatment, "Then agree upon your affair and call your associates. Let not your affair remain dubious to you. Then carry it out against me and delay no more."[48] "Indeed my guardian is God, Who revealed the Book. He befreinds the righteous."[49]

When his sisters heard his speech, they lamented and cried. His daughters wept in a loud voice. Husayn sent to them his brother 'Abbas b. 'Ali and his son 'Ali. He told them, "Silence them, for, by my life, there will be much more to weep in the future." When they became quiet, Husayn praised and glorified God in a manner befitting Him. He sent blessings upon Muhammad and God's angels and prophets. One reporter said, "By God, I have never heard a speaker more eloquent than he in all my life."

Husayn continued, "Trace my descent and reflect upon who I am. Then look towards yourself and be self-critical. Do you think it lawful to kill me and violate my sanctity? Am I not the son of the daughter of your Prophet—peace and blessings upon him. The son of the trustee of the Prophet and his cousin—the first one to believe in God and embrace what His Messenger brought from his Lord? Is Hamzah, lord of the martyrs, not my uncle? Is Ja'far, who flies with wings in heaven, not my uncle? Do you

[48] Qur'an, 10:71.
[49] Qur'an, 7:196.

not testify to the famous statement of the Prophet, peace and blessings upon him, about me and my brother: 'These two are the lords of the youths of paradise.' If you believe that what I am saying is the truth—and it is indeed the truth—for, by God, I have never told a lie since I realized that God hates liars and that it harms only those who engage in falsification. If you do not believe me, then ask those who are among you. They will tell you about me. Ask Jabir b. 'Abdallah Ansari, Abu Sa'id Khudri, Sahl b. Sa'd Sa'idi, Zayd b. Arqam and Anas b. Malik—they will tell you about my status. They will confirm that they heard this statement from the Messenger of God, peace and blessings upon him, about me and my brother. Is this not sufficient to stop you from shedding my blood?"

Shimr interjected saying, "If what you say is true, then I would be worshipping God on a precipice." Habib b. Muzahir said, "By God, I see you worshipping on seventy sharp edges and I testify that you are accurate in your assessment. You cannot comprehend what Husayn is saying because God has sealed your heart."

Husayn continued, "If you doubt this prophetic statement, do you also doubt that I am the son of the daughter of your Messenger. By God, there is no such person but me— search among yourselves or the entire world. Tell me whether you seek revenge for someone among you whom I have killed, for property that I usurped or for an injury that I inflicted?"

No one responded to Husayn. Then, he called out, "Shabath b. Rib'i, Hajjar b. Abjar, Qays b. Ash'ath, Yazid b. Harith, did you not write to me saying, 'The fruit has ripened; the dates have grown green; come to an army that is ready'?" They replied that they had not written such a letter. Husayn responded emphatically, "Glory be to God! By God, you certainly have. O people, since you are displeased with my presence, let me withdraw to a place where I am secure."

Qays b. Ash'ath asked, "Will you not surrender to the authority of your kinsfolk, for they will treat you as you prefer and no mistreatment will come to you from them." Husayn responded, "You are the brother of your brother [Muhammad b. Ash'ath]. Do you want Banu Hashim to seek retribution from you for more than the blood of Muslim b. 'Aqil? No, by God, I will neither submit my hand to them like someone humbled, nor escape like a slave." Servants of God, "I seek refuge in my Lord and your Lord from your stoning."[50] "I take refuge in my Lord and your Lord, from every arrogant man who does not believe in the Day of Reckoning."[51] He made his horse kneel down and instructed 'Uqbah b. Sim'an to tie it.

Sermon of Zuhayr b. Qayn

Zuhayr b. Qayn came to address the crowd:

[50] Qur'an 44:20.
[51] Qur'an 40:27.

> O people of Kufah, I caution you to protect yourselves from the divine punishment, for it is the duty of a Muslim to give advise to his brother Muslim. We belong to the same brotherhood, religion and faith as long as there is no initiation of war. Thus, you are entitled to my advice. But with the start of war ends the brotherhood. Then we shall be one community and you will be another community.
>
> God has subjected you and us to a test on how we deal with the family of his Messenger, Muhammad—peace and blessings upon him. We invite you to assist them and to abandon the tyrant, 'Ubaydallah b. Ziyad. You will perceive nothing from [Yazid and 'Ubaydallah] except evil from their governance. They will gouge out your eyes, cut off your hands and legs, desecrate your body and hang it on the trees. They will kill the best ones among you and your Qur'an reciters, like Hujr b. 'Adi and his companions, Hani b. 'Urwah and the like.

They replied by cursing him and praising 'Ubaydallah b. Ziyad. Then, they summoned Zuhayr and said, "By God, we will not stop until we have killed your master and those with him, or send them peacefully to the governor, 'Ubaydallah." He replied, "Servants of God! The progeny of Fatimah,

may God be pleased with her, are more deserving of your love, compassion and help than the son of Sumayyah [i.e., ‘Ubaydallah b. Ziyad].[52] If you are determined not to render assistance to them, then I beseech you, in the name of God, not to kill them. Do not put an obstacle between the path of this man and his cousin, Yazid b. Mu‘awiyah. By my life, Yazid will be content with you even if you do not kill Husayn.”

Shimr screamed as he aimed an arrow at him, “Be silent. May God silence you for good with death. You have exhausted us with your prolonged sermonizing.” Zuhayr retorted, “O son of one who discharges from both ends, I am not addressing you, for you are of the animal species. By God, I do not think that you have mastered even two verses of the Book. Thus, I forewarn you of the Day of Judgment and of its painful chastisement.” Shimr replied, “Surely, God will soon kill you and your master.” Zuhayr said, “Are you trying to scare me with death? By God, I would prefer death over remaining alive in your company.”

[52] Sumayyah was a prostitute who gave birth to Ziyad, the father of ‘Ubaydallah b. Ziyad, after having intimate relationships with six men of Quraysh. Thus, his father was unknown. He was addressed as Ziyad son of his father or Ziyad son of Sumayyah, until Mu‘awiyah embraced him as his brother. From that point onwards, he was called Ziyad b. Abi Sufyan—Translator.

Then he moved in the direction of the people and addressed them at the top of his voice, "O servants of God, do not be tempted away from your religion by the uncouth imbecile and the likes of him. By God, the intercession of Muhammad, peace and blessings upon him, will not be available to a community who shed the blood of his progeny and kill those who assist them and protect the sanctity of his womenfolk."

A man called out and said to Zuhayr, "Abu 'Abdallah says, 'Turn back. By my life, as the believer of the Pharaoh's community had given good and eloquent advice to his people, so you forcefully gave advice to these people—if only they listened to your advice and admonition.'"

Hurr Repents

When 'Umar b. Sa'd began to advance, Hurr asked him, "May God make you prosperous. Will you truly fight this man?" He replied, "Yes, by God. I will battle in which heads shall fall and hands severed." Hurr said, "Are you not inclined to accept one of Husayn's proposals?" 'Umar said, "By God, if it were left to me, I would be. But, your governor has rejected that option."

Hurr distanced himself from the people and went next to a member of his tribe by the name of Qurrah b. Qays.

He asked, “Qurrah, have you already given water to your horse today?” He replied in the negative. Hurr asked, “Do you want to give it water?” Qurrah reported later, “I suspected, by God, that Hurr wanted to flee the battleground but did not want me to see him do that, fearing my objection. Thus, I said, ‘I have not yet watered it—let me provide it with water.’ Then, I withdrew from him. By God, if he had informed me of his true intention, I would have joined him to Husayn.”

Hurr began to advance gradually toward Husayn. A member of his tribe, Muhajir b. Aws, asked him, “What do you intend to do, Hurr? Do you wish to attack?” He kept quiet and shuddered. Muhajir continued, “O Hurr, by God, your conduct arouses suspicion. By God, I have never seen you behave like this. If I were asked to identify the most courageous person in Kufah, I could not neglect mentioning your name. So, what of the nervousness I see in you today?” Hurr replied, “By God, I have offered my soul a choice between heaven and hell. By God, I will not give priority to anything in relation to heaven, even if it entails that I be cut to pieces and burnt.”

He whipped his horse and came next to Husayn. He said, “May God accept my sacrifice to safeguard your life, son of the Messenger of God. I was the one who prevented you from returning. I monitored your movements on the road and forced you to halt at this place. By God—the One, who has no other—I never imagined that the people would reject your proposals and come to this state of affairs. I justified my behavior by saying to myself that I was justified to obey

these people on some issues—for perhaps, they will not consider me disobedient and, in the final analysis, they will accept one of your proposals. By God, if I had thought that they might reject your proposals, I would not have joined them against you. I have come to seek repentance from my Lord for what I have done and offer my life before you in expiation. Would you accept that as my repentance?"

Husayn replied, "Yes. May God accept your repentance and forgive you. What is your name?" He replied, "I am Hurr b. Yazid." Husayn said, "You are a free man [*hurr*], just as your mother named you. God willing, you are free in this life and in the hereafter. Come down." Hurr said, "I will be a better horseman for you than a foot soldier. I will fight them on my horse and will dismount only at the end of my life." Husayn said, "Do what you think is best."

Hurr went forth to address his followers, "People, will you not accept one of the proposals presented by Husayn? Through it God may offer you a way to avoid war and conflict with him?" They replied, "The person in authority here is ‘Umar b. Sa‘d, so speak to him." Hurr spoke to him in similar fashion and ‘Umar replied, "I am eager to find a way out, if I could."

Hurr continued his address, "O people of Kufah, may your mothers be deprived of you. You invited him and when he came to you, you betrayed him. You had resolved to lay down your lives for him and now you confront him with the intent to kill. You have grasped his life by the throat and

have surrounded him from all directions. You prevent him from returning to another place where he can find safety and security for himself and his family. He has come into your hands like a prisoner who can produce no benefit for himself or repel harm. You deny him, his womenfolk, his children and his followers the waters of the Euphrates, which the Jews, Christians and Magians come to for drink. Even the pigs and dogs roll in the Euphrates. They may die from the severity of thirst. How evil has been your treatment of the progeny of Muhammad. May God deny you water on the Day of Resurrection if you do not repent and end what you scheme to do on this day and this hour." Some opponents threw arrows at him. He went in front of Husayn and shielded him.

Chapter 9
The Battle Begins

‘Umar b. Sa‘d moved forward toward them and said, “Dhuwayd, bring out your standard.” ‘Umar put an arrow in his bow and released it, saying, “Bear witness that I was the first to strike.” Thereafter, people began to shoot at each other.

Yasar (a *mawla* of Ziyad b. Abi Sufyan) and Salim (a *mawla* of ‘Ubaydallah b. Ziyad came out and said, “Who is there to engage us in single combat?” Habib b. Muzahir and Burayr leaped forward, but Husayn ordered them to sit down. Then ‘Abdallah b. ‘Umayr Kalbi got up and said, “Abu ‘Abdallah, may God have mercy on you. Give me permission to confront them.”

Husayn saw a tall man with broad shoulders. He said, “I think that he will be a formidable opponent. Go ahead with the duel, if you wish.” The man marched forward. They asked him who he was and he gave them his lineage. They said, “We do not know you. Thus, let Zuhayr b. Qayn, Habib b. Muzahir or Burayr b. Hudayr come out to challenge us.” Yasar awaited combat in front of Salim. Ibn Kalbi said to Yasar, “Son of an adulteress. You wanted to engage in a duel with anyone. The person has arrived and he is better than you.” He struck him with his sword. While he was occupied in his engagement with Yasar, Salim attacked him. People tried to warn him of Salim’s advance, but he did not notice until the latter fell upon him. Ibn Kalbi tried to

shield himself from Salim's blow with his left hand, which resulted in the loss of his fingers. Then he attacked Salim and killed him. After killing them both, he recited the following:

If you do not recognize me, I am the son of Kalb
Adequate is my affiliation and status with 'Ulaym

I am a man of strength and power
and do not flinch when confronted with hardship.

I assure you, Umm Wahab,
that I will march forward, stabbing and striking,

Like a servant who has complete faith in the Lord.

His wife, Umm Wahb, grabbed a pole and went toward her husband saying, "May my father and mother be sacrificed for you, fight to preserve the righteous progeny of Muhammad." He tried to send her back to the women's area. She clung to his clothes and said, "I will not let you go unless I die with you." Husayn called out to her and said, "May you receive the best of rewards for being a good family member. May God have mercy on you. Return to the womenfolk and sit with them for fighting is not obligatory on women." Thus, she went back to them.

First Attack

‘Amr b. Hajjaj, who was on the right flank, launched the first attack against the right flank of Husayn’s followers. When they came near, Husayn’s followers knelt down on their knees and stretched out their spears to prevent the advance of the opponents’ horses. They shot arrows at them which killed and wounded some of them.

Miracle

A person from Banu Tamim named ‘Abdallah b. Hawzah approached Husayn and said, “O Husayn, O Husayn.” Husayn asked, “What do you want?” He said, “Are you expecting hell-fire?” Husayn replied, “Not at all. I am moving to a compassionate Lord and an able intercessor.” He asked for the identity of the person and was told Ibn Hawzah. Husayn made a supplication to God, “O Lord, plunge him into the fire.” Upon this, his horse got restless and caused him to fall with his legs hanging onto the stirrup. His head was dragged on the ground, striking every stone and tree until he died.

Mutual Imprecation and Martyrdom of Burayr

Yazid b. Ma‘qil came out and said to Burayr, “O Burayr b. Hudayr, how do you think that God has dealt with you?” He replied, “By God, He has dealt with me in the best manner and He has treated you badly.” Yazid b. Ma‘qil said, “You

are a liar and have always been a liar. Do you recall what you said when I used to go to the Banu Lawdhan—that ‘Uthman b. ‘Affan is self-indulgent, that Mu‘awiyah b. Abi Sufyan was misguided and misguiding others, and that the guided and truthful imam was ‘Ali b. Abi Talib?”

Burayr replied, “I testify that this is my position and my opinion.” Ibn Ma‘qil retorted, “I testify that you are among those led astray.” Burayr said, “I invite you to a mutual imprecation and ask God to curse the liar and kill the one who spreads falsehood. Come out and do combat.” They both stepped forward and raised their hands in supplication, “O God, curse the liar and the one who is astray.” They confronted each other and exchanged blows. Yazid b. Ma‘qil struck a light blow on Burayr that did no harm to him. Burayr struck his opponent a severe blow that penetrated his helmet and reached his brain. As a result, the man fell down with the sword of Hudayr stuck in his head.

While Burayr was attempting to extract his sword from Ibn Ma‘qil’s head, Radi b. Munqidh ‘Abdi attacked him and they exchanged blows for a while. Then, Burayr sat on his chest and Radi called out, “Where are the helpers and defenders?” Upon this, Ka‘b b. Jabir galloped out to attack Burayr and struck him on the back. When Burayr sensed it, he fell upon Ka‘b and bit his nose. Ka‘b continuously struck him until he forced Burayr down. The point of Ka‘b’s spear disappeared in Burayr’s back, so he struck him with his sword and killed him.

Martyrdom of ‘Amr b. Qarazah

‘Amr b. Qarazah came out to protect Husayn and said,

The battalion of helpers ought to know
that I will guard honor

With the blow of a boy—who is not fragile.
To safeguard Husayn, I offer my life and
my home.

He was killed in battle. His brother ‘Ali, who was with ‘Umar b. Sa‘d, called out, “O Husayn, you are a liar and the son of a liar. You misled and tempted my brother until he was killed.”

Husayn replied, “Surely, God did not lead your brother astray, but guided him. You are misled.” ‘Ali b. Qarazah said, “May God kill me if I do not kill you, or I will die in your pursuit.” He tried to attack Husayn, but Nafi‘ b. Hilal blocked him with a blow that caused him to fall down. The supporters of ‘Ali b. Qarazah picked him up to treat him for his wound.

General Battle

In the meantime, people were confronting each other and engaging in battle. Among them was Hurr, who marched forward reciting, “I continuously advanced my horse against

them until it was showered in blood." His horse had wounds on its ears and blood flowed from its nose.

Yazid b. Sufyan cried out, "By God, if I had seen Hurr b. Yazid when he fled, I would have stabbed him with my spear." Hasin b. Tamim said to him, "This is the same Hurr that you desired to fight." He accepted that and went out to challenge Hurr saying, "Are you prepared to engage me in single combat?" Hurr replied affirmatively and moved forward. Yazid b. Sufyan's very soul was in Hurr's hand—as soon as he approached Hurr, the latter killed him.

Nafi' b. Hilal entered the battle reciting, "I am al-Jamali. I am steadfast on the religion of 'Ali."

A person named Muzahim b. Hurayth came out against Nafi' saying, "I follow the religion of 'Uthman." Nafi' retorted, "Rather you follow the religion of Satan." Then he attacked and killed him.

'Amr b. Hajjaj screamed, "O foolish people. Do you not understand the party that you are battling against? Their horsemen seek death, and thus no one should engage them in single combat. They are small in number with limited time. By God, if you but threw rocks at them, you would kill them." 'Umar b. Sa'd agreed with him and praised him for his wise opinion. He sent out messages that none should engage in a duel with Husayn's followers.

Second Attack

‘Amr b. Hajjaj came toward the followers of Husayn and addressed them, “O people of Kufah, keep firm your obedience and resolution. Do not hesitate to fight those who have deviated from religion and opposed the imam.” Husayn responded, “O ‘Amr b. Hajjaj, are you inciting people against me? We are the ones who deviated from religion, while you are steadfast in it? By God, you will surely know which party has strayed from the religion and is worthy of being toasted in hell fire when our souls are taken out and you die with your deeds.” Thereafter, ‘Amr with his right flank attacked Husayn from the direction of the Euphrates. This continued for a while.

Martyrdom of Muslim b. ‘Awsajah

In the engagement, Muslim b. ‘Awsajah was struck. The companions of ‘Amr b. Hajjaj cried out, “We killed Muslim b. ‘Awsajah Asadi.” Then, they left and the dust rose, as Muslim lay dying. Husayn walked towards Muslim, who was on the verge of death, and said, “May your Lord have mercy on you, O Muslim b. ‘Awsajah. ‘Among the believers are men who have accomplished their vow and others are waiting; but no change has come [in their determination] at all’”[53]

[53] Qur’an 33:23.

Habib b. Muzahir came close to him and said, "O Muslim, your death is difficult for me to bear, but be joyful of the reward of paradise." Muslim replied in a faint voice, "May God assign you the same reward." Habib said, "I know that I will very soon follow your footsteps. Otherwise, I would have preferred that you delegate me responsibilities to discharge your affairs, as you are entitled to this, due to kinship and religion."

Muslim said, "I have delegated you the tasks. May God have mercy on you." Then, he pointed toward Husayn and said, "Die in defense of this man." Habib replied, "By the Lord of the Ka'bah, I shall do that." Then he died and his maidservant cried out, "O Ibn 'Awsajah! O master!"

Third Attack ¾ Martyrdom of 'Abdallah b. 'Umayr

Shimr b. Dhi Jawshan launched an attack with his left wing upon the left flank of Husayn. Husayn's followers held their ground and pushed back Shimr's followers with spears. However, 'Abdallah b. 'Umayr was killed by Hani b. Thubayt and Bukayr b. Hayy. He was the second person to die from Husayn's camp.

Attacks by Husayn's Followers

The followers of Husayn fought valiantly and ferociously, though they numbered a mere thirty-two horsemen.[54] They forced the Kufan army to retreat. When ‘Azrah b. Qays, in charge of the Kufan cavalry, saw that his troops were being put to flight from all directions, he sent ‘Abd al-Rahman b. Hisn to ‘Umar b. Sa‘d, “Do you not see the severe attack that my cavalry is receiving from this small number? Send reinforcements of foot soldiers and archers against them.” ‘Umar asked Shabath b. Rib‘i to march against them. He replied, “Glory be to God. Are you reduced to sending an eminent leader of the Mudar of this town with the archers because you cannot find anyone else? Surely, you can find someone else beside me.”

‘Umar b. Sa‘d instructed Hasin b. Tamim to launch an attack equipped with five hundred archers. They came close to Husayn and his followers and sprayed arrows at them. They severely wounded their horses, forcing them to dismount. The battle continued with great intensity until midday. The opponents could launch an attack from only one direction, because the tents in Husayn’s camp had been gathered together. When ‘Umar b. Sa‘d realized this, he sent out some men to pull down the tents on the right and left. Three or four followers of Husayn went through the tents to prevent the enemy from destroying and plundering the tents. Husayn’s followers successfully fought them off and

[54] There is no consensus on the exact number of soldiers on Imam Husayn’s side. Sayyid Tawus reports a tradition on the authority of Imam Baqir that Imam Husayn had 45 horsemen and 100 foot soldiers. Likewise, there is a dispute on the number of martyrs on Imam Husayn's (a) side—Translator.

wounded them. Upon this, ‘Umar b. Sa‘d ordered that the tents be set on fire. Husayn said, “Let them set the tents on fire because if they do so, they will not be able to come through it and approach you.” As a result, they could attack only from one direction.

Fourth Attack

Shimr b. Dhi Jawshan launched an attack until he reached the tent of Husayn. He poked through it and called out, “Fetch me fire, so I can torch this place and the people inside it.” The women screamed and came out of the tent. Husayn screamed at him saying, “O son of Dhu Jawshan, are you calling for fire to burn down my tent and my family? May God scorch you in hell-fire!”

Humayd b. Muslim said to Shimr, “Glory be to God, this act does not befit you. Do you want to take two evil qualities for which God will punish you—killing children and women? By God, it is through the killing of men that your governor will be pleased with you.” Then, Shabath b. Rib‘i came and said, “I have never heard a statement more evil or a mode of conduct more repulsive than yours. Are you turning into a person who terrifies women?”

Together with ten of his colleagues, Zuhayr b. Qayn fiercely attacked Shimr and his followers, driving them out of the tents and forcing them to flee. The people from the army

of ‘Umar b. Sa‘d surrounded Zuhayr and his followers who continued to fight until they were killed. When someone from Husayn’s camp died, it was apparent; but it was unclear how many people died on the other side, because they were numerous.

Intermission for Midday (*Zuhr*) Prayers

When Abu Thumamah ‘Amr b. ‘Abdallah Sa’idi noticed the intensity of the war, he said to Husayn, “O Abu ‘Abdallah, may my soul be sacrificed for you. These people are beginning to approach you and by God I will not let them harm you unless I am killed protecting you, God willing. I would love to meet my Lord, having performed prayers whose time has commenced.” Husayn lifted his head up and said, “You remembered the prayer. May God include you among those who offer prayer and remembers Him. Yes, it is now the preferred time of prayer. Ask them to stop attacking us until we have offered prayers.”

But Hasin b. Tamim scoffed at this, “Your prayer will not be accepted.” Habib b. Muzahir responded, “You claim the prayer of a member from the progeny of the Messenger of God, peace and blessings on him, will not be accepted while your prayer would be, you donkey?”

Martyrdom of Habib b. Muzahir

Hasin b. Tamim attacked them and Habib b. Muzahir came out to challenge him. Habib hit the face of Hasin's horse with his sword. The horse jumped suddenly and dropped Hasin from it. He was rescued by his followers and taken to their camp. Habib recited the following,

> I am Habib and my father is Muzahir
> A horseman of a combat ignited.
> You have numerical strength
> but we are more faithful and patient.
> We have sound and clear proof for our position
> we are of stronger moral character and less blameworthy than you.
> I swear that if we had your numerical strength
> or even half, you would flee from us
> O evil people in lineage and essence.

Habib fought fiercely against a person from Banu Tamim named Badil b. Suraym, who was struck and killed by Habib. Later on, Hasin b. Tamim struck Habib on the head with the sword and he fell down. A member of Banu Tamim severed his head.

Martyrdom of Hurr b. Yazid Riyahi

Hurr went out and began to recite war poetry,

I will strike my sword at their eminent people
on behalf of the exemplary men who settled at Mina and Khayf
I swear that I will not die until I have killed.
Today, I will only advance forward, not retreat.
I will deal them a severe blow with my sword
without losing courage or flee.

Hurr and Zuhayr b. Qayn fought fiercely in such a manner that when one of them was attacked by numerous opponents, the other went to his rescue. They continued with this strategy for some time until a foot soldier gave a fatal blow to Hurr and killed him.

Midday Prayer (*Zuhr*) and Martyrdom of Sa'id b. 'Abdallah Hanafi

Then Husayn prayed with them the prayer of fear. Sa'id b. 'Abdallah was guarding Husayn and tried to shield him from the arrows. He fell down as a result of the wounds and died.

Martyrdom of Zuhayr b. Qayn

Zuhayr came out reciting the following while tapping on the shoulder of Husayn,

Move forward for you have been guided,
You are the one who guides and are rightly guided.
Today, you will meet your grandfather, the Prophet,
And Hasan, and ‘Ali with whom God is pleased
And the courageous young man with two wings[55]
And the lion of God, the martyr who is alive.[56]

Kathir b. ‘Abdallah and Muhajir b. Aws launched a massive attack against Zuhayr and killed him.

Martyrdom of Nafi‘ b. Hilal Jamali

Nafi‘ had inscribed his name on the tips of his arrows. When he shot these arrows, he said, “I am al-Jamali. I am steadfast on the religion of ‘Ali.” In the process, he killed twelve followers of ‘Umar b. Sa‘d, excluding the ones he wounded.

He continued to fight until both his arms were cut and he was taken prisoner by Shimr b. Dhi Jawshan and his followers. He was brought to ‘Umar b. Sa‘d with blood dripping onto his beard. ‘Umar said to him, “Woe to you

[55] Ja‘far b. Abi Talib
[56] Hamzah b. ‘Abd al-Muttalib.

Nafi‘. What has caused you to behave in this manner against yourself?" He replied, "Surely, my Lord knows my intentions. I have killed twelve of your followers, in addition to the ones I wounded. I have no regrets and if I had still my limbs with me, you would not have been able to capture me."

Shimr said to ‘Umar, "Kill him, may God make you prosperous." ‘Umar replied, "If you want, you kill him." Shimr took out his sword. Nafi‘ said to him, "By God, if you were a Muslim, how grave and serious you would view meeting God, having shed our blood. All praise belongs to God who has destined that we die through the wicked ones of His creatures." Then Shimr killed him.

Martyrdom of Two Ghifar Brothers

When the followers of Husayn realized that they were unable to prevent the advance of the opposing army and protect Husayn or themselves, they began to compete with each other to be the first to die in defence of Husayn. Two sons of ‘Azrah, called ‘Abdallah and ‘Abd al-Rahman and belonging to Ghifar, came to Husayn, "O Abu ‘Abdallah, peace be with you. The enemy has forced us to retreat. We would like to be killed in front of you as we try to safeguard and defend you." Husayn said, "You are both welcome. Come close to me." They approached him and began to fight, as one of them recited,

Banu Ghifar, Banu Nizar and

Khindif know the truth.
That we will fight against immoral man
with every sharp and severe sword.
People, safeguard sons of free men
with swords and spears.

They fought fiercely in front of Husayn until they were killed.

Martyrdom of the Two Youths of Jabir

Two youths of Jabir named Sayf b. Harith b. Suray‘ and Malik b. ‘Abd b. Suray‘, who were paternal cousins and half-brothers came to Husayn while crying. Husayn asked them, “Cousins, why are you crying? By God, I hope that you will both be prosperous in the near future.” They said, “May God sacrifice our lives to safeguard yours. No, by God, we are not crying for ourselves; rather, we weep for you because we see that you are surrounded and we are unable to repel the opponents.”

Husayn said, “Cousins, may God reward you with a reward reserved for the pious, because of your empathy and for sacrificing your lives to defend me.” The two young boys went forward while looking toward Husayn and said, “Peace be on you, son of the Messenger of God.” He replied, “And peace be on both of you.” They fought until they were killed.

Martyrdom of Hanzalah b. As'ad Shibami

Hanzalah came before Husayn and proclaimed, "'O my people! I fear that the same fate will befall you that happened on the Day of the Allies, and that happened to the people of Noah and 'Ad and Thamud, and those who came after them. But God does not desire injustice for His servants. O my people! I fear for you on the Day of Summoning, a day when you will turn back to flee; there will be no one to protect you from God. Whoever God causes to err, has no guide.'[57] People, do not kill Husayn, 'lest God destroy you with punishment. He who forges a lie will be disappointed.'"[58]

Husayn said to him, "O Ibn As'ad, may God have mercy on you. Surely, they have subjected themselves to divine punishment by refusing to listen to your invitation to the truth. They have come out against you with the intention to kill you and your companions. What will be their state after killing your righteous brothers?" Ibn As'ad said, "You have spoken the truth. May I be sacrificed for your sake. You are more learned than I and more entitled for that. Shall we not journey to the hereafter and join our brothers?" Husayn said, "Journey to a place that is better than this world and all that it contains. To a kingdom that does not fade away." Hanzalah said, "Peace be on you, Abu 'Abdallah. May God bless you and your family. May he enable us to recognize you in His paradise." Husayn said, "Amen, amen." Hanzalah moved forward and continued to fight until he was killed.

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[57] Qur'an 40:30-33.

[58] Qur'an 20:61.

Martyrdom of Shawdhab and ‘Abis b. Abi Shabib Shakiri

‘Abis advanced forward while accompanied by Shawdhab, *mawla* of Shakir. He said to him, “What would you like to do?” He replied, “Indeed, what I would like is to fight beside you to defend the son of the daughter of the Messenger of God, peace and blessings on him, until I die.” ‘Abis said, “This is what I thought you would say. Go forward next to Abu ‘Abdallah so that he can dedicate you just as he dedicated his other followers. I too would like to dedicate you...” Shawdhab went to Husayn and greeted him. Then he marched on and fought until he was killed.

Then ‘Abis b. Abi Shabib said, “Abu ‘Abdallah, by God, there is no person on earth among my close or distant relatives who is dearer and more beloved to me than you. If I could ward off oppression against you and keep you from being killed—through something more precious than my life and blood—I would do so. Peace be with you, Abu ‘Abdallah. I bear witness that I have received guidance from you and your father.” Then, he advanced toward them while unsheathing his sword and tapping his forehead with it.

Rabi‘ b. Tamim reports:

> When I saw ‘Abis, I recognized him and cried out, “People, this is the lion of the lions. He is the son of Ibn Shabib. No one should go out to challenge him.” ‘Abis called out, “Will no one come forward to engage me in single combat?” ‘Umar instructed to shower him with stones from all sides. When ‘Abis saw this, he threw off his breastplate and helmet, and charged the people. By God, he put to flight more than two hundred men. Finally, they circled him from every side and killed him.

Martyrdom of Abu Sha‘tha (Yazid b. Ziyad b. Muhasir)

Abu Sha‘tha had come with ‘Umar b. Sa‘d, but defected to Husayn’s camp when the latter’s proposals were rejected by ‘Umar b. Sa‘d. He fought bravely and recited,

> I am Yazid and my father is Muhasir.
> I am braver than a lion waiting in anticipation.
>
> O Lord, I am a supporter of Husayn
> and have deserted and left Ibn Sa‘d.

An experienced marksman, he bent before Husayn. He shot one hundred arrows and only about five missed. When he would shoot, he would say, “I am the son of

Bahdalah, the horseman of ‘Arjulah.” Husayn would say, “O God, make his arrows reach the target and bestow upon him the reward of paradise.” He continued to fight until he was killed.

Martyrdom of Four People who had Joined Imam Husayn en Route to Kufah

Jabir b. Harith Salmani, Mujammi‘ b. ‘Abdallah ‘A’idhi, ‘Amr b. Khalid, and Sa‘d, *mawla* of ‘Amr b. Khalid, had fought fiercely at the beginning of the battle. However, they advanced too far into the opponent’s camp, and so were surrounded by them and cut off from their comrades. ‘Abbas attacked and was able to rescue them. They then resumed their attack until they were killed at the same place.

Martyrdom of Suwayd b. Khath‘ami

Among the last surviving companions of Husayn was Suwayd b. Khath‘ami. He was wounded and died with those who fell. When he heard the enemy call out that Husayn had been killed, he rose and fought with his knife, since his sword had been taken. Finally, he was killed by Zayd b. Ruqab and ‘Urwah b. Taghlibi.

Martyrdom of 'Ali b. al-Husayn al-Akbar[59]

The first person to die from the Banu Abi Talib that day was 'Ali al-Akbar b. Husayn b. 'Ali. His mother's name is Layla b. Abi Murrah. When Husayn sent 'Ali b. Husayn to the battlefield, his eyes brimmed with tears. He said, "God, you are witness against them that I am sending one of your servants who most resembles your Messenger in appearance and temperament, blessings upon him and his family.

He advanced against the people reciting,

I am 'Ali b. Husayn b. 'Ali
By the Lord of Ka'bah, we are closer to the Prophet than you.
By God, the son of an immoral person will not judge us.

He recited these words several times. Abu Faraj relates that 'Ali Akbar fought intensely and then returned to his father saying, "O father, I am thirsty." Husayn replied, "My

[59] Shaykh Mufid in *Kitab al-Irshad*, tr. I.K.A. Howard, p. 379 refers to the fourth Shi'i Imam as 'Ali b. al-Husayn **al-Akbar** and the 'Ali, whose mother was Layla, is addressed as 'Ali b. al-Husayn **al-Asghar** The six-month old infant who was martyred in Kerbala is named 'Abdallah b. al-Husayn or 'Abdallah al-Radi' (i.e., the suckling child). Thus, in historical sources, 'Ali al-Asghar does not refer to the six-month old infant. The latter is referred to as 'Abdallah b. al-Husayn or 'Abdallah al-Radi'. This is confirmed by Abu al-Faraj, Mufid, Tabari, Sibt b. Jawzi, Ya'qubi and Mas'udi—Translator.

beloved, be patient for it will not be long before the Messenger of God shall quench your thirst."

'Ali Akbar resumed the battle. Then, Murrah b. Munqidh saw him and said, "May all the evil of the Arabs fall upon me if I do not stop him from causing havoc and deprive his father of him." 'Ali Akbar continued to attack the people until Murrah engaged him and struck him. The people pounced on 'Ali al-Akbar and cut him with their swords. He called out, "My father, my last salutations of peace to you. I see my grandfather, Messenger of God, sending you greetings of peace and saying, 'Hurry, come to us.'" Then he took a deep breath and his soul parted his body and left this world.

Husayn said, "My son, may God kill the people who killed you. How daring they are against the compassionate God, violating the sanctity of the family of the Messenger. Life has no purpose after your departure." Zaynab came out hurriedly and cried out, "My brother, my nephew." She came and put herself on 'Ali b. Husayn. Husayn came to her and took her back to the tent. Then he took with him a few young men and went to collect the body of 'Ali b. Husayn. They returned back and placed his body near the tent where they had been fighting.

Martyrdom of Qasim b. Hasan

Humayd b. Muslim relates: A youth advanced towards us with a shining face and carrying a sword in his hand. He was wearing a shirt, waistcloth and a pair of slippers. One of its straps was broken—I believe it was the left one. ‘Amr b. Sa‘d b. Nufayl said to me, “By God, I am going to attack him.” I said to him, “Glory be to God. Why do you have to do that? Is it not enough that these people that you see have completely surrounded him?” He said, “By God, I am going to attack him.”

With this, he launched an attack against Qasim and did not return until he struck his head with the sword. Qasim fell down on his face and called out, “O uncle!” Husayn appeared like a hawk and fought with ferocity like a lion. He struck ‘Amr with his sword while the latter tried to shield himself with his arm, which was severed from the elbow. The horsemen of ‘Umar b. Sa‘d tried to rescue ‘Amr but instead trampled him to death.

When the dust settled, Husayn was seen standing by the head of Qasim whose feet were stretched out on the ground. Husayn said, “May the people who killed you be deprived of God’s mercy, because the one who will take them to task on the Day of Judgment on your behalf will be your grandfather. By God, it is difficult for your uncle to bear the thought that you called out to him and he was unable to respond to your call—or he tried to save your life but to no avail. By God, the number of people who are prepared to kill us are many and the helpers few.” Then, he carried him by placing him next to his chest. He put the body next to his

martyred son, ‘Ali b. Husayn and other members of his family.

Martyrdom of ‘Abbas b. ‘Ali and His Brothers

‘Abbas said to his brothers from his mother’s side, ‘Abdallah, Ja‘far and ‘Uthman, “My brothers, advance forward, so I can be your heir—for you have no children.” They did so and fought fiercely until they were martyred.[60]

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[60] Abu Mikhnaf relates no details about the martyrdom of ‘Abbas. Thus, the following account is quoted from Shaykh Mufid’s *Kitab al-Irshad*, tr. I.K.A.Howard, pp. 360-61: “Husayn’s thirst became severe, and he set off towards the dam, trying to reach the Euphrates. In front of him was his brother ‘Abbas. However, the cavalry of Ibn Sa‘d, may God curse him, blocked his route. Among these was a man from the Banu Darim; he said to [the cavalry]: ‘Woe to you! Prevent him from reaching the Euphrates, do not let him get water.’ Then al-Husayn, peace be upon him, cried out: ‘O God, I am thirsty.’ The Darimi was angered and shot an arrow at him, which lodged in his throat. Al-Husayn, peace be on him, pulled out the arrow and held his hand below his throat. Both his palms were filled with blood, which he shook away, then he said: ‘O God, I complain to You about what is being done to the son of the daughter of Your Prophet.’ Then he returned to his position, while his thirst had become [even more] severe. Meanwhile, the people had surrounded al-‘Abbas and cut him off from [al-Husayn]. Single-handedly, he began to attack them until he was killed, may God have mercy on him. The two who took part in killing him were Zayd b. Warqa al-Hanafi and Hakim b. al-Tufail al-Shabsi, after he had been covered with wounds and could not move.”

Martyrdom of ‘Abdallah b. Husayn (‘Abdallah al-Radi‘)[61]

Husayn was seated when the suckling child ‘Abdallah b. Husayn was brought to him. One of the Banu Asad member (Hurmulah b. Kahil or Hani b. Thubayt Hadrami) fired an arrow that smashed into him. Husayn shook ‘Abdallah’s blood to the ground from the palm of his hand and said, “O Lord, if it is your decree to withhold help from heaven, then do so—for you know what is in our best interest. Take revenge for us from these oppressors. O God, judge between us and a people who invited us with promises of support, and then turned against us and killed us.”

Martyrdom of Sons of ‘Abdallah b. Ja‘far

‘Abdallah b. Qutbah attacked ‘Awn b. ‘Abdallah and killed him. His brother Muhammad was killed by ‘Amir b. Nashal.

Martyrdom of the Progeny of ‘Aqil

[61] Sibt b. Jawzi reports that Husayn was very uneasy because the infant ‘Abdallah was crying from severe thirst. Husayn lifted him up in his hand and said, “O people, if you have no mercy on me, at least have mercy on the infant.” A man threw a spear and slaughtered the child. See footnote no. 52—Translator.

‘Uthman b. Khalid and Bishr b. Sawt attacked ‘Abd al-Rahman b. ‘Aqil b. Abi Talib and martyred him. ‘Abdallah b. ‘Urwah struck at Ja‘far b. ‘Aqil and martyred him. Thereafter, ‘Amr b. Subayh shot at ‘Abdallah b. Muslim and the latter put his hand to fend off the blow. He was unable to move his hand and suddenly another arrow hit him, splitting his heart. Laqit b. Yasir killed Muhammad b. Abi Sa‘id b. ‘Aqil.

Martyrdom of Sons of Hasan b. ‘Ali

‘Abdallah b. ‘Uqbah shot at Abu Bakr b. Hasan b. ‘Ali and martyred him. ‘Abdallah b. Hasan b. ‘Ali was martyred by an arrow shot by Hurmulah b. Kahil.

Chapter 10
Martyrdom of Imam Husayn

When only three or four of his followers remained alive, Husayn instructed that his Yemeni trousers be brought to him. They was painstakingly sewed and they shined. He tore them to discourage their removal from his body upon his death.

Husayn remained in one position for a good part of the day. Any opponent who approached him turned quickly back, dreading the burden of shedding the blood of Husayn. Finally, Malik b. Nusayr, a member of Banu Badda', came and struck Husayn on his head with his sword such that it cut through the hooded cloak and reached his head. The cloak became soaked in blood. Husayn said, "May you be incapable of eating or drinking with your hand. May God raise you on the Day of Judgment among the oppressors." He discarded the bloodied hooded cloak and called for a cap and surrounded it with a turban.

Shimr, together with about ten foot soldiers from Kufah, moved towards the place where Husayn had placed his belongings and his family. Husayn tried to go near that place, but they prevented him from doing so. Husayn said to them, "Woe to you. If you have no loyalty to religion and are not concerned about the Day of Judgment, then at least conduct yourselves with civility and fairness in matters of this world. Stop the wicked and ignorant men from hindering my access to my family and belongings." Shimr responded,

“This is your responsibility, O son of Fatimah.” Husayn attacked them and forced them to withdraw.

‘Abdallah b. ‘Ammar relates:

> The foot soldiers fiercely attacked Husayn from the right and left. He responded to the ones on his right and forced them to flee. He did the same to the foot soldiers on his left and put them to flight. By God, I have never seen such determination from a person who had lost his sons, his family and his followers. None possessed a stronger spirit or more courage than he. By God, I have never seen anyone like him. Husayn dispersed any attack from the right or the left flank as the goats flee when the wolf pounces on them.

‘Umar b. Sa‘d approached Husayn when Zaynab, daughter of Fatimah, came out and said, “O ‘Umar b. Sa‘d, will you just passively watch while Abu ‘Abdallah is being killed?” Husayn fiercely attacked the cavalry and said, “Are you encouraging each other to kill me? By God, my killing is an act that is most detestable in the sight of God. I surely hope that God will honor me by humbling you—then grant me the opportunity for revenge without your knowledge. By God, if you do end up killing me, God in return will shower you with hardship and shed your blood. The punishment will be manifold and severe.”

Shimr marched toward Husayn with foot soldiers comprised of Sinan b. Anas, Khawali b. Yazid, Salih b. Wahb, Qash‘am b. ‘Amr and ‘Abd al-Rahman b. Ju‘fi. They surrounded Husayn completely from all directions. A very young boy [‘Abdallah b. Hasan b. ‘Ali] from Husayn’s family advanced toward him. Upon this, Husayn asked his sister, Zaynab, daughter of ‘Ali, to hold him, but the young boy refused and hastily moved towards Husayn.

Bahr b. Ka‘b galloped toward Husayn with the sword. The young boy said to him, “O son of an unchaste woman, do you intend to kill my uncle?” Bahr struck him with a sword and the latter tried to protect himself with his arm but the sword penetrated his skin and left the arm hanging. The young boy called out, “O mother!” Husayn picked him up, embraced him, and said, “My nephew, bear with patience this calamity and look at the best side, for God will surely unite you with your righteous forefathers consisting of the Messenger of God, ‘Ali b. Abi Talib, Hamzah and Hasan b. ‘Ali, blessings of God upon them all.”

Then Husayn said, “O God, deny them the drops of rain from the sky and the blessings of this earth. O God, you have given them respite until now but split them into factions, disunited. May their rulers never be pleased with them. They invited us with promises to help us and instead they have turned against us and killed us.”

A long time passed, during which anyone who wanted to kill Husayn could have. But everyone detested committing this heinous act and preferred someone else to

carry it out. Shimr gave out a call to the people, "Woe to you! What are you waiting for? May your mothers be deprived of you." Then they launched an attack from all sides.

Zur'ah b. Sharik Tamimi struck Husayn on his left hand and shoulder. They kept a distance from him as he fell upon his face. In this state, Sinan b. Anas struck him with a spear. He did not allow anyone to approach Husayn out of fear that he might lose Husayn's head. Finally, he sat upon Husayn's body and severed his head, which he handed over to Khawali b. Yazid.

Items that were on Husayn's body were plundered. Qays b. Ash'ath grabbed Husayn's cloak and Ishaq b. Haywah took his shirt. A man from Banu Nashal robbed the sword and a member from Aswad grabbed the sandals. Bahr b. Ka'b took his trousers. Husayn's body lay bare on the sands of Kerbala.

Those who do wrong shall come to know major upsets and reversals by which they will be overturned.
(Qur'an, 26:227)